Folklore of Nepal

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By the same author

OF GODS AND GLACIERS
THE NATIONAL CADET CORPS
SWARAG KE DWAR
A Novel in Hindi
THE TRAGIC MYSTERY OF RUPKUND

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To my wife
Bholi
whose contribution
to this work
lies between
the lines

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MAN MOHAN

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Introductory Notes

FOLKLORE forms an essential clue to the evolution of a peoples' social, emotional and cultural life, and is an index to their ethical and aesthetic norms and sense of values. A study of the folklore of a people reveals their ideas and ideals, hopes and fears, aspirations and superstitions

I was commissioned into the Fifth Battalion of the 8th Gorkha Rifles in 1955. Everything about the Gorkhas began to fascinate me as I came to know my jawans better—their sincerity and simplicity, their keen sense of humour and ready repartee and above all, their healthy attitude to life. Phonetically, Nepali is a very soft language and it came quite naturally to me. In less than two years I had attained a fair mastery of the language and passed the higher language examination. A firmer grasp of their language and local dialects prodded me to know them more intimately. I devoured books on Nepal and listened to the tales narrated by men who fell in step with me (on numerous occasions). *Folklore of Nepal* is the fruit of this labour.

Nepal has always been one of our most important neighbours. It is a Hindu state, and the ancient history of the two countries is inextricably linked. Apparently, there is no difference in our mythologies. The Hindu trinity of Shiva, Vishnu and Mahesh, as also the other of the Hindu pantheon, figure as prominently in the myth and folklore of Nepal. Garuda, the mount of Vishnu, for instance is embossed on the currency of Nepal. Their language is written in the Devanagri script. The major Nepalese festivals, have familiar names—*Maha Sankranti*, *Shri Panchami*, *Magh Purnima*, *Maha Shivratri*, *Holi*, *Chaitra Dashain*, *Ram Navami Nag Panchami*, *Raksha Bandhan*, and *Deepawali*. Our mendicants, recluses and rajas often sought shelter in Nepal. And often Nepal and India were ruled by the same sovereign. We are, in fact, one people. Surprisingly, many Indians are ignorant of the Nepalese and their beautiful country. This attitude is, possibly, a by-product of British colonialism. Nepal avoided outside contact and shut her doors to all foreign powers. Cut off from the rest of the world, under the shadow of mighty Himalayas, Nepal became the last home of mystery for the Western nations. And, like Korea, the world looked upon her even as a hermit nation. Consequently, she became remote even from India

Nepal is a tourists' paradise. Variations in altitude, from the tropical Terai to the highest mountain valleys and peaks in the world, endow Nepal with a charming diversity of climate and landscape. The country provides many contrasts—primitive, medieval, modern—in an exquisite setting of jade green mountains, delightfully vernal meadows and rushing streams. For rest and repose one can always retire to the quieter, remoter villages. We ought to learn to know and understand these friendly, hospitable people better.

The purpose of this book is to bridge the wide gulf that exists between the minds of people, and to provide the means of welding together—bonds of a deeper human understanding.

MAN MOHAN

New Delhi.
2 July 1982

Folklore of Nepal

The Country and the People

Geography

Like a crest jewel, Nepal is situated in the lap of the Himalayas between latitudes 26'.22" and 30'.27", and longitudes 80'.3" and 88.'12". The country has an east-west elongated shape with a length of approximately 800 kilometers and a width ranging from 150 to 180 kilometers. It has an area of about 141,000 square kilometers. Its southern most parts are in the hot and humid Terai, meaning the 'wet land', and highest regions lie in the Great Himalayan Range with towering giants of the high Himalayas such as Mount Everest, Annapurna and Dhaulagiri. Out of a total of fourteen peaks lying above 8000 meters in the world, as many as eight are in Nepal. From the foregoing it can be easily inferred that the country has by far the maximum variations in altitude and thereby the maximum resultant variations in climate and verdure.

Nepal is a land-locked country to the three sides of which—west, south and east—lies India and to its north, the Tibet region of China. It is an important buffer state between the two Asian giants.

Geographically, the country can be divided into four major regions—the Great Himalayan Range, the watershed of which forms the boundary between Nepal and Tibet; the Highlands—that is the valleys and alps lying south of the Great Himalayan Range; the Nag Tibba Ranges, which in Nepal are called the Mahabharat Ranges with heights upto 2500 to 3000 meters; and the Terai which includes a portion of the Shivalik Range. Mahabharat Range is the most densely populated region followed by the Terai and lastly, the Highlands. Only the snowman lives in the great Himalayan Range.

The main drainage system of Nepal is made up of four rivers which are all tributaries of the mighty Ganga. From west to east these are the Sethi Karnali which has a major tributary in the Mahakali forming the western boundary of Nepal with India, the Gandaki, the Bhagmati and the Dudh Kosi. These rivers are fed by the perennial snows through hundreds of smaller rivers and nullahs. All movement is, therefore, restricted to existing bridges and fords.

The crops and jungles of Nepal are as varied as its altitude and climate. The wild life similarly is of the greatest variety on Earth ranging from elephants, rhinoceroses and tigers of the Terai, to the ibex, thar, serow and snow leopard of the higher regions. The avifauna is equally varied. Nepal, in fact is a bird-watchers' paradise. More than three hundred exotic varieties exist in the country. Inevitably, there are many legends revolving around the birds. The colourful monal pheasant is the national bird of Nepal. There is a distinct possibility that the Yeti or the abominable snowman is an ape living in the higher regions. The tales of sighting of yeti have been heard now for the last two hundred years and cannot be mere hallucinations. B.H. Hodgson was the first European who reported seeing a yeti in 1832. Since then, more than forty Europeans and countless Asians have reported seeing the snowman. John Hunt of the first successful Everest Expedition reported seeing its foot prints. Eminent men like Eric Shipton and Michael Ward also saw them. Nepal is the only country where the yeti has been sighted from time to time.

History

The earliest known rulers of Nepal were the Kirats who were residents of north west India prior to the influx of the Indo-Aryans. History records that there were twenty-two Kirat dynasties that ruled Nepal for ten thousand years. The Kirats hosted Emperor Ashoka when he visited Nepal in third century B.C. However, the first Nepalese dynasty from which the modern history starts is the Lichavi dynasty that ruled Nepal from fifth to the eighth century, generally coinciding with the reign of the Guptas in India. During the reign of the Muslims in India, Nepal maintained its independence and sheltered many fugitive Hindu princes from various states of India.

The present dynasty of Nepal starts in 1768 with Prithvi Narayan. He was a descendant of the Rajputs who had established their rule in the sixteenth century at Gorkha district, forty miles west of Kathmandu. The term Gorkha was in fact first applied to the descendants of the Rajput rulers of the area Gorkha. All the Nepalese have now come to be called Gorkhas.

Prithvi Narayan unified the whole country under his rule. The Gorkhas conquered Sikkim in 1789 but did not consolidate their rule there. After plundering the country, they left turning their attention to north entering Tibet in 1790. However, a Chinese army of seventy thousand men ousted them from there. Turning south and west, Gorkhas occupied large territories of Kumaon and Garhwal in India. It is noteworthy that their treaty or *Dharampatra* signed with one Harsha Dev Joshi, the prime minister and the commander-in-chief of Kumaon, is in Sanskrit perhaps the last treaty in the language of ancient India.

The Gorkhas clashed with the rising British power in India. The British and the Gorkhas fought three wars. After the third war with British, the present boundaries of Nepal were laid down in 1816 in the treaty of Sagauli. Vide this treaty, Nepal accepted the presence of a British Resident and agreed to the enrolment of Gorkhas in the Indian Army. The boundaries of Nepal have remained unchanged since 1816.

In 1847, the prime minister of Nepal, Jang Bahadur Rana got his opponents killed in the Kot palace and seized most of the power relegating the royal family to the background. In 1857, he put his forces at the disposal of the British Viceroy Canning for use against the freedom fighters of the First War of

Indian Independence (termed as the Great Mutiny by the British). The ruling family remained under the influence of the Ranas till 1951—that is the reign of King Tribhuvan.

Following the advice and example of India, the very first elections to the Legislative Assembly were held in 1959. However, due to frequent wrangles between the Newar and Gorkha members, the king dissolved the parliament in December 1960. In 1963, a system of three-stage elections was introduced vide which ninety members are elected by the village *Panchayats*, nineteen are elected by the trade unions and the rest are nominated by the king because of their qualities and achievements. The decisions of the king are approved by the Assembly.

The kingdom of Nepal is the only surviving Hindu kingdom in the world. The present king, Birendra is the grandson of Maharaja Tribhuvan. He has initiated various measures for the economic and social uplift of the Nepalese people.

Languages Spoken in Nepal

It may be a matter of surprise to many people that there are a number of different languages spoken in Nepal many of which do not appear to have even a remote resemblance with each other. People of the same ethnic group also speak many different dialects. This is so because of the settlement of widely different ethnic groups in different parts of the country, and difficulties of communication.

There are eight major languages spoken in Nepal. These are *Khas Kura*, which is the state language and is understood all over the country, *Rai Kura*—a dialect spoken by the Rais, *Limbu Kura*—the dialect of Limbus, *Gurung Kura*—the language of Gurungs, *Newari Kura*—the dialect of Newars, *Thakali Kura*—the language of the Thakalis, *Magar Kura*—the language of the Magars and *Tamang Kura*—the language of the Tamangs and descendents of the Tibetians.

Khas Kura and *Newari Kura* are written in the Devnagri script and contain many Hindi and Sanskrit words from which the languages have undoubtedly originated. The influence of Sanskrit is, in fact, discernible in all the languages of Nepal.

Emergence and development of the *Khas Kura* in Nepal may be compared with the evolution of the Urdu in India. The literal meaning of Urdu is "Army". The Urdu originated as a common spoken language of the Army of the Moghuls where soldiers from India and Persia mixed freely. The word *Khas* in Nepali is applied to the children of the inter-marriages of two different races or communities. Due to numerous migrations from India into Nepal, many inter-marriages took place; the offspring being always referred to as *Khas* or *Khos*. *Khas Kura*, the language of these people was destined to be the official language of Nepal which was also the case with Urdu in many parts of India.

In the big towns like Kathmandu and Pokhra, English is understood by many. In the remote regions, many people understand only their own dialects.

The People

Before we study their folklore for a deeper insight into the minds of the Nepalese people, let us meet them. Nepal is an anthropological garden, where diverse races, clans and tribes bloom in the free Himalayan atmosphere. Approximately 80 per cent of the population are Hindus, little less than 20 per cent are Budhs and the remainder a sprinkling of the *Bono Po* (the pre-historic religion of the Highlands), Muslims and others. The 1970 census placed the population a little over eleven millions.

Nepal is mainly a rural country with more than four thousand villages dotted over the landscape. Each Nepalese village or group of villages is unique in its customs and social organization. There are only four towns with populations of more than 30,000. These are Kathmandu, Patan, Bhatgaon and Biratnagar. The population of Kathmandu is over two lakhs.

My knowledge of the Gorkhas (for the last quarter of a century) tells me that they are among the friendliest people in the world. A people ostensibly free from evil propensities, they are God-fearing and truthful. Their hospitality is spontaneous and easily given. They make excellent soldiers and are renowned the world over as tenacious fighters.

In the dawn of pre-history Nepal sheltered many tribes. The Kirats and the Nagas, who resided in the north and west of India prior to the influx of the Indo-Aryans, were slowly elbowed out to the eastern parts, to Nepal and Sikkim. A number of Indian princes sought shelter in Nepal to escape religious fanaticism whenever it exploded. In the course of her chequered history, China has often overrun Tibet, forcing her people to seek sanctuary in Nepal. Nepal, then, is a conglomerate of disparate tribes and races living in different valleys, donning different clothes and speaking different languages and dialects. While the aborigin tribes, like the Bhoksas, Tharus and the Dhimals, reside mainly in the Terai regions, the Brahmins, Chhetris and Thakuris are found all over the country. The Gurungs live mainly on the southern slopes of the Annapurna Ranges, in west and central Nepal. The Magars (also called Thapas), are in the southern slopes of the Dhaulagiri mountains. The Rais, Limbus and Sunwars are, in the main, the inhabitants of the eastern regions; the Sherpas and Tamangs live along the northern highlands, and the Newars are mostly found in the valleys of Kathamandu and Pokhara.

For our present study, the ethnic grouping of the people is of no particular importance. In a word, the present Nepalese are mixture of the original inhabitants and the migrants from the north and south. Pure Tibetans are naturally to be found near the Tibet border, and Indians in the Terai region and the midlands. The rest of the areas are a mixture of the three—the degree varying from place to place.

The major religions of Nepal are Hinduism and Buddhism. The elements of one intrude into the other so that it is not easy to differentiate them. Moreover, most deities are common to both religions. The people as a rule are religious and observe all traditional customs and rites. The glorious cultural heritage of Nepal is manifest in the diverse social customs and the hundreds of festivals which are celebrated almost every day in some part of the country or another. Innumerable temples decorate the landscape. So numerous, indeed, are the shrines that Nepal has often been referred to as the 'Kingdom of Gods' and 'The Land of Temples'.

The most remarkable thing about Nepal is the total absence of violent religious strifes and racial conflicts on her soil. Although most of the population is Hindu there is no discrimination. This profound religious tolerance was noted and recorded by Hiuen Tsang, the seventh century Chinese traveller. In some Hindu and Buddhist temples, one even comes across portraits of Christ and Mahatma Gandhi. This splendid egalitarian spirit is evidently a reflection of the genetic excellence of the average Nepalese.

The Magars

The Magars, or Mangars as the tribe prefers to call itself, are one of the important tribes of central and western Nepal. It is said that the Magars settled down in Palpa about seven to eight centuries ago and then fanned out to other areas of central and western Nepal. They had their own Raja, and an independent Magar State flourished till the nineteenth century. As their numbers grew and the pressure of population on land increased, the Magars spaced out towards the west and east of Palpa (within Nepal) and sprawled into Darjeeling District, Sikkim and Bhutan, where a large number of this tribe is still encountered. The Magars are now met with on the hill districts west of the Nepal valley, generally as far as Dailekh. Some Magars did settle in eastern Nepal where they constitute a minority. They are subdivided into seven clans viz., Ale, Thapa, Burathoki or Bura, Gharti, Rana, Pun and Roka. Of these, the Rokas are the smallest and the Thapas the biggest clans. All clans, however, enjoy equality of social status and inter-clan marriages are normal. Their language, *Magar Kura*, is however, not spoken by all the clans. It is spoken chiefly by the Ales, Ranas and the Thapas. Many Puns and Buras speak a dialect called *Kam Kura*, or *Pun Kura*, which has considerable local variations. The clan name serves as the surname for men, and they are addressed as such—Bal Bahadur Ale, Ram Parsad Bhurathoki, Man Bahadur Pun, Alekaman Gharti and so on. All Magar women, on the other hand, are called Magarni. This is the collective name and not the clan name.

The Thapas comprise the largest clan in Nepal. They are widely distributed in the entire country. The Puns have Mongolian looks. They are perhaps the simplest of all the Nepalese tribes and figure in many stories as simpletons. A typical Pun wears his hair long and greases them with ghee (clarified butter). The Puns are more localized than the other Magar clans, and mostly come from the districts of Char Hazar Parbat and Baglung along the river Kali up to Dana. The Burathokis bear a strong resemblance to the Puns. They are of big built and make excellent soldiers.

The Magar Ranas are distinct from the Chettri Ranas.

They are a big clan and are widely distributed. Their ancestors are believed to be the Chittaur Rajputs who migrated to Nepal during the early Muslim era in India. Some scholars also believe Magars to be immigrants from Tibet and Mongolia. Other Nepalese tribes call Magars as *Matwale* which literally means 'the happy-go-lucky people'. This is because of the Magars, fondess for alcoholic drinks. All the same Magars make excellent soldiers.

The Gurungs

The Gurungs mostly inhabit higher and relatively more northerly parts of central Nepal. Most of the Gurungs hail from the high pasture lands of Lamjung. They are also scattered in other parts of the country, particularly in eastern Nepal. For a newcomer it is rather difficult to differentiate a Gurung from a Magar by outer appearance and dress. All Gurungs, however, wear a thread necklace—*Rup*. The men wear nine strands with nine knots, and the women seven strands with seven knots. The Gurungs are predominantly shepherds and graziers, whereas the Magars are mainly agriculturists.

The Gurungs comprise of two main clans: the *Charjat* and the *Sorajat*. The *Charjat* consists of four castes viz. the Ghales, Lamas, Lamchanes and Ghotanes. A *Charjat* Gurung considers himself a shade higher then the *Sorajat* and the Ghale is regarded as the highest caste among the Gurungs. *Sorajat* clans are Chormi, Ghyabre, Kyabche, Kurumchhe, Jangre, Thorje, Dorsali, Rilami, Foju, Pom, Thin, Migi, Khatra, Yoj, Paingi, Kholai, Sogun and Thorjami. Different clans observe different taboos in their food habits—some do not eat chicken whereas others do not touch mutton or pork.

The Gurungs are both Hindus and Buddhists and their customs contain elements of both. Their language is *Gurung Kura*. The dialects differ from one Gurung strong-hold to another. All dialects, however, have one common feature; they are all phonetically nasal. At times, a Gurung describes himself (in *Gurung Kura*) as a Thammai or Gurum. A Gurung woman, of any caste or clan, is called a Gurungseni.

The Thakuris

The Thakurs, or Thakuris are the Rajput immigrants from India to Nepal. They claim royal descent and enjoy a comparatively higher social status by virtue of their birth. The present royal family of Nepal are the Thakurs of the Sahi clan. A number of privileges accrue to a Thakuri because of his birth. He receives a better education and occupies an important position in the army—as also in the civil service. Some important posts are reserved for the Thakuris. In the social heirarchy they are only next to the Brahmins. They are not restricted to any particular part, but are scattered fairly widely throughout the length and breadth of the country. Their lineaments are like those of the North Indians. Their major clans are Chand, Mall, Khan, Sahi and Sen. And these (clans) are further subdivided into hundreds of others. The prefix to a surname sometimes indicates the district from which the man comes. A Bhirkotya Mall is thus a Thakuri hailing from the village Bhirkot, irrespective of his present residence. As this is also a custom prevalent in some parts of India, the practice may well have been imported with the migration of the tribe to Nepal. The offspring of mistresses and concubines (of the Thakurs), are known as Khawas. They normally practice endogamy. A Thakur may marry a Thakurni girl of any clan other than his own. Thus a Chand may marry a Mall girl and vice versa. The marriages are solemnized by the Brahmins.

The Chhetris

The Chhetris are yet another warrior class of Nepal who enjoy a high social status. Chhetri is a derivation of the Sanskrit word *Kshatriya*. The Chhetris are immigrants from India and regarded as members of the upper classes. Although found in relatively greater numbers in the Kathmandu valley, they are widely scattered all over the country. They are orthodox Hindus and worship the cow. The sub-sects of the Chhetris are Basnet, Bhandari, Adhikari, Khatri and Karki. A Chhetri woman of any sub-sect is called a Chhetrini.

The Tamangs

The Tamangs are sometimes called Bhotias, a term normally applied to the Tibetans. Tamangs are, in fact, immigrants from

Tibet. In the eastern parts of the country, they are called Lamas and Murmis. A great number of Tamangs are also found in North Sikkim and the Darjeeling district of West Bengal. The Tamangs have a rich mythology and look upon themselves as the descendents of a cow who bore three sons. The Tamangs are the progeny of the youngest son.

Tamang is a Tibetan word literally meaning a horse-trader (Ta=horse, Mang=trader). The majority of the Tamangs live in the upper Bhagmati just outside the hills of the Kathmandu Valley and in the hilly regions of Northern Zones.

The head-man of a Tamang village is called *talukdar*. He acts as an agent of the government for collecting revenues and taxes.

Tamangs are divided into several sub-groups called *Thars*. Each *thar* has its own distinct name. There are about twenty-five such *thars* in the Tamangs.

The Thakalis

The Thakalis dwell in the area between Ghasa and Jomson along the river Kali. Because of the concentration of Thakalis in this area the river is called Thak-Khola. The tribe has taken to trade and most of the affluent shopkeepers all over Nepal are the Thakalis. They can be compared to the Marwaris of India. Their women are also proficient in business—a quality exclusively restricted to the Thakali women in Nepal. Many *bhattis* all over the country are run by Thakali ladies. The *bhattis* run by them are the cleanest, most well-managed and by far, the most popular.

Thakalis are divided into four clans: Gauchan or Chyoki, Tulchan or Salki, Sherchan or Dhimzen and Bhattachan or Bhurki. The gods of the four clans are represented in the form of animals namely dragon, elephant, lion and yak.

The Newars

The Newars are another important business community in the country, and are easily the shrewdest people in Nepal. They are believed to be the original inhabitants of the Kathmandu valley. A large number of them can speak English and Hindustani and have the potential of becoming good guides. The Newari women also run some *bhattis* along routes frequented by soldiers and tourists. The Newars eat beef. Orthodox Hindus, therefore, normally, avoid eating with them. Their most significant contribution to the country is in the sphere of the arts: painting, sculpture and architecture. Most of the high quality *Tankas* have been painted by the Newars.

Newars are both Mongoloid and Mediterranean in origin. They speak *Newari Kura* which has about a dozen different dialects. Newari language is influenced by Sanskrit; the script being Devnagri.

About the origin of Newars there are several theories. Some believe that Newars have come from the regions north of the Himalayas while others place their origin in South India having close ties with Nairs or Nayars of the Malabar coast. That is one reason why some of them called are Acharyas.

Majority of the Newars live in Patan, Bhaktapur, Kirtipur and Kathmandu. Fifty per cent of the total Newar population inhabits the Nepal Valley around Kathmandu. The remaining Newars live in Eastern and Western hills adjacent to Terai plains including western towns of Pokhra, Tansen, Butwal and far western Silgarhi and Doti.

Newars who are businessmen and shop-keepers are called *Sresthas*. *Uray* or *Udhays* are those Newars who are generally merchants or craftsmen. The farmer Newars are called *Jyapus*. Some Newars also work as potters and are called *Kumals*.

Rais and Limbus

The Rais and Limbus dwell in eastern Nepal and spill over in large numbers into Sikkim. They are the descendents of the Kirats, who were known for fashionable living. They were the first immigrants into Nepal. They are generally short tempered and any heated discussion with them, or criticism, is best avoided. The Rais and Limbus have their own peculiar customs and beliefs. Their custom of marriage is of particular interest. When a boy wants to marry a girl he is invited by the parents of the girl to their house. Here he is required to sing a song, which is really a riddle. A girl's failure to reply, gets the boy his bride. Should she, however, solve the riddle, the boy goes back a rejected suitor. Dissimulations, of course, are always there in case the couple are in love—the cleverest girl feigning an inability to reply. Rais are settled in the valleys of the Dudh

Koshi and Arun Koshi rivers and their tributaries. Majority of the Rajs live at an altitude of three to six thousand feet above the sea-level. The place where Rais inhabit is called *Kirant Pradesh.*

Limbu is the second main tribe of Kirat origin. They are also addressed as *Subha*, meaning the land lord. They title of *Subha* was given to Limbu headmen when their territory was annexed to the kingdom of Nepal. Both Rais and Limbus speak different dialects called *Rai Kura* and *Limbu Kura*.

The Limbu tribe is divided into a number of clans or *thars*. Some of the *thars* are further sub-divided and each sub-division has a separate name of its own.

Both Rais and Limbus are very conscious of their rights and are always prepared to agitate to get what they feel is their due.

Sherpas

The Sherpas are immigrants from Tibet. They have their own language and practice the *Bono-po* or the Tantric Lamaism of Tibet. They make excellent porters in the higher regions.

Sherpas inhabit parts of the northern districts of the Sagarmatha along the river Dudh Koshi and its tributary, the Helambu and upper Trishul valleys. The Sherpas are well-known the world over as tough mountaineers. Their original home was Solukhumbu. The word 'Sherpa' in Tibetan means the people of the east. (Shar=east and Pa=people). This is so because the Sherpas originally lived in the eastern part of Tibet.

Tharus And Bhoksas

In the Nepal Terai, we encounter two interesting tribes, the Tharus and the Bhoksas. They spill over in large numbers into the adjoining areas of Indian Terai to the west. Quite a few of them live by the chase and depend on the produce of the jungle.

The Tharus claim descent from the armies of the Rajput Chieftains Jaimal, Taran Singh and Fateh Singh of Chittoor (lying in Rajasthan state of India). It is said that they fought in the great war between Ram and Ravan. Unable to stand the din and danger of war and the privation of an alien land, they trembled with fear (*thartharaya*). Hence, their name Tharu, or 'those who trembled in war'. Ashamed at their conduct and jeered at by others, they decided to hide in the jungles where they live to date. Tharus have an interesting tradition. It is believed that most of the men were killed in the battle. Their wives, perforce lived on with servants who were also Rajputs but of a lower order. By custom, therefore, the ladies are superior to the men and not only treat them like servants, but also do not permit them to enter the kitchens.

Tharus have been divided into two main categories; *Pradhans* and *Apradhans*. *Pradhans* are further subdivided into six different kinds who are all regarded higher in social status than *Apradhans* who are subdivided into twenty six different groups.

The Bhoksas claim descent from Jagdev Singh, a Rajput descendant of Raja Bhoj, a famous legendary ruler of Indian-lore. On account of family feuds, they deserted their homes and moving towards the rising sun, reached Terai. Their dresses are similar to those of the people of Rajasthan.

Both Bhoksas and Tharus have fine features and expressive eyes. The best time to visit them is around the festival of Holi (in March) when the community is in a gay mood and performs colourful tribal dances. The whole community is literally doused in drinks.

Both tribes have a great belief in the supernatural. At night, an unearthly quiet descends over their habitations for no one stirs out for fear of ghosts. It is strange that even educated people have not shed superstitions and prejudices in this regard.

Rajbansis (Koches)

Rajbansis are among the oldest people of the eastern Terai. They are also called Koch or Koche. They are mentioned in the Hindu epics, the Mahabharata and Ramayana. Their chiefs fought in the battle of Kurukshetra in the Mahabharata period.

Rajbansis are both Hindus as well as Muslims. Hindu Rajbansis worship many deities and observe festivals similar to other Hindus. Muslim-Rajbansis have adopted Islamic faith. However, majority of the Rajbansis do not come strictly in any religious group and worship the spirits.

Danwar, Majhi and Darai

Danwars, Majhis and Darais are indigenous people of Terai. Physically and culturally, they are similar to Tharus. They inhabit the northern regions of Terai-forests and inner valleys. It is believed that they are Rajputs who had migrated at the time of the Muslim invasions of India. However, some think that these people have been living in this part of Nepal for several thousand years. Danwars and Darais completely depend on farming and fishing while Majhis are mainly fishermen or ferrymen.

Ethnically and socially, these three types of people are comletely different from other ethnic groups of Nepal. There are no social sub-divisions in any of these groups.

Lohomis

Lohomis inhabit the upper Arun Valley in the district of Sankwa Sabha in eastern Nepal. They are also called *Kath Bhote* or *Kar Bhote*. They are a very cheerful and hardy people. They have about a dozen scattered villages on the mountain slopes with a deep and narrow gorge passing through the middle of the colony. Their main occupation and trade is agriculture and animal husbandry. They are divided into clans called *rhus* which are further subdivided into exogamous family groups. They follow the *Bono-po* religion which is crowded with ghost stories. They perform animal sacrifices to appease and please the gods and ghosts.

Olangchung

The trade route in eastern Nepal passes through the upper reaches of the Tamur valley with the main trading centre lying at Olangchung or Holumg. The people of this business centre are called Olangchung people. They rear the pack animals; yaks and mules, and earn their livelihood by renting them out. These people travel north to Tibet and south to India.

The Olangchung people can be divided into three categories. First, the highest people in social status are called *Shiva*. They are the original inhabitants. The people of the second category are called *Fedzava*. They are immigrants. The third category is known as *Longme* who are lowest in the ladder of social status. Each category of people consists of several families who possess a common main house known as *Manang* where they gather every month for a ritual type of worship for the community welfare.

Sunwars and Jirels

These people constitute a small ethnic group and work mainly as goldsmiths. They are believed to be the offshoots of the *Magars*. Sunwars live along the villages of the Likhu Khola and Khumti Khola. Jirels live along the Jiri and Sikri valleys. These areas are situated in Ramechhap and Dolakha, the two districts of the Janakpur Zone, and a small part of Okhaldhunga District of the Sagarmatha Zone. Sunwars and Jirels are divided into *bara thar* or twelve clans and *das thar* or ten clans respectively. Their appearance is like Magars with round faces and narrow slit eyes. Sunwar women are quite beautiful and charming. The Sunwar language is slightly different from the Magar Kura but appears to be its offshoot. However, Jirels speak a dialect which is somewhat similar to the language of the Sherpas. Some believe that Jirels are the descendants of marriages between Sunwars and Sherpas. There is a strong influence of Sherpas on Jirels in social and religious customs. Sunwars ars influenced by Brahmins and Chhetris.

Sunwars follow Hinduism while Jirels have adopted Lamaistic Budhism.

Musalmans

Musalmans or Muslims are immigrants from India. In physical appearance, they are similar to the Indian and Mediterranean races. But for the beard and peculiar *Gujar* dress, they cannot be easily distinguished from the Brahmins, Chhetris and Newars. Kashmiri Musalmans came to the Nepal and Pokhra valleys through Tibet in the 15th and 16th centuries. Later some more Musalmans fanned into western Terai and hills from Agra and Avadh. Muslims are scattered all over Nepal, though majority live in Terai on the banks of the Sethi Karnali.

Majority of the Musalmans who live in Terai are tailors and bangle-sellers. They are locally known as *Churata* (meaning the bangle-sellers). Kathmandu and Pokhra valley Musalmans are traders and shopkeepers. Like in India, the Muslims are divided into four clans; *Saiyad, Sheikh, Pathan* and *Moughal.*

Marriage and Divorce Customs

Both polyandry and polygamy are practiced in the remoter areas, though these were officially banned a long time back. The marriage customs of the people vary from arranged marriages, like those of the Brahmins (*Bahuns* in Nepali), to the *rodighar* of the Gurungs. The *rodighars* are youth clubs where young boys and girls of a village meet and mix freely and choose their partners by a system of trial and error. The management of the *rodigarh* is generally left to the unmarried girls or married women without children. Strangers are also admitted, provided their presence is acceptable to some members. Married women without children are a special attraction for the free lancers.

There is an element of permissiveness in the love-life of the Sherpas, Lamas and other tribes of the northern high lands.

One of the strange marriage customs in Nepal, especially in Newar community, is the marriage of the virgins to the Bel fruit trees. This is performed to ensure that the girl never becomes a widow even if her husband dies.

An important wedding rite is called *Bagdan* in which Lord Ganesha; the diety of peace and plenty, a lamp and a *kalash* (holy pot) are worshipped. The bride's father puts a coconut, a betel leaf, an areca-nut, a sacred thread and some money in a pot. Holding this pot in his hands he declares that he is giving away his daughter in marriage. Though of Hindu origin, some of the Budhs also follow this custom.

Another wedding rite is called *Shilapooja* or stone worship. In this, fried paddy is placed on a large dish made out of bamboo. The brother of the bride puts this paddy in both the hands of the bride who throws it over her head to the rear. The groom then clasps the thumb of the bride and says, "You are the earth and I am the sky. Let us unite and produce progeny. May we live for hundred years in which our powers of vision and hearing should remain undiminished".

Eight mountains are then worshipped. These mountains are the Sumeru (Mount Kailash in Tibet), Shekhu, Udyachal, Marut, Vindhyachal (in India), Himalaya, Burait and Sharad. The couple takes seven steps in front of eternal fires in a ceremony called *saptapadi*. The groom requests the bride to have a look at the sun if the marriage is celebrated in the day time and the Pole star in the event of the wedding ceremony being performed at night. Several hours are then spent in front of the fire in prayers of gods, and vows of faithfulness and pure love are taken. The groom, thereafter, puts vermilion in the parting of the hair of the bride.

In some of the tribes of the northern highlands, the marriages are solemonised by the payment of bride price by the groom. This is paid to the mother of the bride as the price of the milk. On the day fixed for marriage, the boy visits the girl and forcibly takes her away. The marriage party then comes to the bride's house. The girl's people take out swords and other weapons and hot words are exchanged. At times, there is a free exchange of blows till someone suggests that after all every girl has to marry and why not marry the lovers in peace. This custom of mock fight is also noticed in the *Bhotia* tribe of Western Himalayas and the *Konde Reddy* tribe of Andhra Pradesh province in India. The attitudes of the Nepalese people towards divorce and widow remarriage is equally varied and diverse.

Divorces are quite common; more so in child couples. If a married woman prefers to live with another man, her first husband is entitled to compensation. The process is unending and a woman may thus marry a number of times, though the depreciation of the woman is higher and consequent compensation lower every time. This custom is called *Jarikhata* which literally means the 'Running Account'! A girl thus marries any number of times but depreciation goes higher and higher. Thus the younger society is almost in a state of flux till the blood in their veins tends to cool off. Even up to old age, the affections of some women remain fickle.

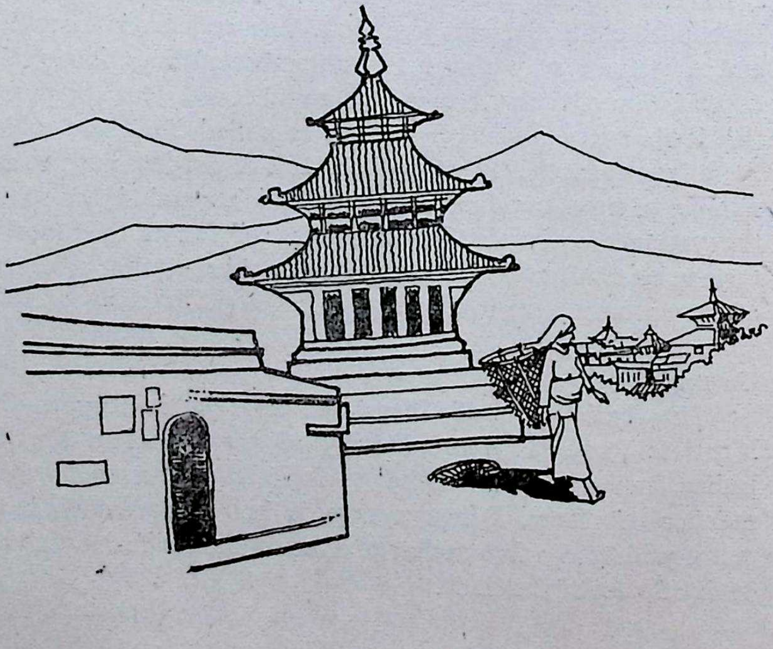
Currency

The basic unit of Nepalese currency is Rupee. The Nepalese Rupee is approximately 35 per cent less than the Indian Rupee in value. Exchange facilities are available at a number of places. Barter system is however prevelent in the countryside and a free exchange of commodities forms the real basis of most of the trade.

Superstitions

Worship of nature beings, ghosts and goblins is a part of all the religions. These creatures often figure in their folk-tales. In their beliefs and superstitions the Nepalese appear to be (almost) obsessed with giants. This fetish with size could, perhaps, be traced to their encounters with the Yeti. Many scholars now believe that there was, in fact, an age when giants fraternized with men. It may be the memories of that era which now shadows their superstitions.

It is the folklore of this lovable people, living a free life and breathing the fresh Himalayan air, that this slim volume deals with.



Nepal Khari ko Katha

Legend of Nepal Valley

IN THE remote past, Nepal was covered by sea. With time and the periodic upheavals of nature, this sea dissappeared, giving way to many lakes. One of the lakes was called *Nagtal*, after the name of its presiding diety Nagraja Karkoktak. The lake reflected the eternal snows of the Himalayas. Its shores were rich in flora and fauna. In short, it was an idyllic place. At about the time this lake came into existence, Rishi Vyas told the Pandavas that they were guilty of *Gotra hatya* from which they could be absolved only atter a *darshan* of Shiva. The brothers went to the Himalayas and managed the briefest glimpse of the lord, who quickly disappeared into the hills. The Pandavas ferreted him out and began to chase him. Shiva transformed himself into a buffalo and dashed up the hills. Bhim saw the divine beast near the present site of Kedarnath, in the Uttar Pradesh province of India, and ran forward to catch it. The (divine) buffalo asked the Prithvi for shelter and went underground. Bhim, however, grabbed hold of its hind parts. The head of the buffalo surfaced in Nepal and he came to be called *Pashupatinath*, or 'Lord of the animals'.

Nepal itself is known as *Pashupatihath bhumi*, or the land of Lord Pashupatinath. People started pouring in to pay homage to the Lord. But the *Nagtal* lake became a hindrance for them. The lake was a favourite haunt of one *Asura* who troubled the pilgrims a great deal. Lord Vishnu then incarnated himself as a boar, dragged the *Asura* in the lake and killed him. He then siphoned off the water of the lake to form the river Bhagwatmati, or the river of Vishnu. This sacred river is now called Bhagmati. The dry bed of the lake became the site of many towns which sprang up in due course to commemorate the advent of Shiva as *Pashupatinath*. The temple of the Lord is a consequence of the hard work of many generations on the banks of sacred river Bhagmati. Architecturally, the temple is like a pagoda, with a gilt roof and massive beautifully carved doors. It is the holiest of the Shiva temples.

According to a different Hindu version, during *Dwapar* age Nepal was ruled by the *Asuras*. An *Asura* king called Mahindra, the son of Varnasur, dammed the Bhagmati and turned it into a lake. He drowned and killed people who passed that way. Terror-stricken men prayed to Lord Krishna to deliver them from the depradations of this *Asura*. The lord destroyed him and reconverted the lake into the holy river. The valley again became habitable. To commemorate this event, a number of Krishna temples were constructed all over the country. (The most famous of those was constructed by Raja Sidhi Nar Singh Mall in the sixteenth century. Events from the Hindu epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, were carved on the stone walls of this temple.)

A colourful Buddhist legend says that all types of flowers and plants grew in the ancient lake except the lotus. One day on *Chaitra-Purnima*, a *Mahatma*, called Vipaswi Buddha, passed that way and threw the root of a lotus in the lake. He told his followers, 'This root will grow into a plant. When the plant blossoms into a flower, *Swayambhu*, or the 'self-born' will be revealed here as a flame. The water of the lake will drain away and leave behind a beautiful valley. Men will then move in to inhabit this valley.'

Many many years passed. One day on *Ashwin-Purnima*, the lotus plant blossomed into a flower. It had a heavenly beauty and an unearthly charm and reflected five hues of a flame. It was in fact *Swayambhu* or the self-born, revealing itself. The news spread far and wide and reached the ears of the *Mahatma* Sikhi Buddha. He came to *Nagtal* with a large number of devotees and by way of obeisance they made three *parikramas* around the lake. Sikhi Buddha then sat on the bank for meditation and remained there for many many years. At last he attained *moksha*, and his devotees interred his body in the lake of the *Swayambhu*.

Years passed before another *Mahatma*, Vishambhu Buddha, arrived at the lake with his followers and meditated there for many years. When he attained *moksha*, he told his devotees that the lake would soon be replaced by a valley. At about this time Manjushri Buddha was residing in the north-eastern part of Tibet, and he came to *Nagtal*, in the wake of Vishambhu Buddha with his followers. On reaching there they completed the prescribed three *parikramas* round the lake. Then Manjushri went to the south bank and drawing his scimitar, cut a passage through the hills. Water gushed out through the new widened course. The drained lake was replaced by a valley through which flowed the River Bhagmati. Manjushri attained *moksha* and left his mantle in the hands of his devotee, Dharamkar, who became the first ruler of Nepal. The people established a village and named it Manjupatam in honour of Mahatma Manjushri. This village is now called Deopatam.

The exact place where Manjushri Buddha made a passage through the hills is called Chover, and it is situated eight kilometres south-west of Kathmandu. It offers an excellent panoramic view of the snow-clad Himalayas. A deep gorge located there is believed to bear the indentation marks of Manjushri's scimitar.

Legend of Kathmandu

IN THE remote past, the beautiful valley of Nepal was covered by a lake called Nagtal. The water was drained off through the kind intervention of Vishnu, the Lord of preservation, and the valley became habitable. Men converged into this beautiful land from far and wide. Soon the population swelled, for nature was bountiful. The people, aware that the land was a gift of God, were noble and god fearing. But it is a truism that even the best of people are prone to petty misunderstandings and quarrels. As time passed some disputes naturally arose. There was, however, no one to administer justice. And as neither side relented, petty quarrels soon became serious conflicts. So the elders prayed to God to send them a Raja who could administer justice and settle their disputes. This wish was also granted. But a Raja must have a capital. Thus the seat of the Raja came to be called Kantipur or the dwelling place of authority. With a fair arbiter to settle their disputes, the people had more time for prayers and hard work. This led to a period of tremendous prosperity and the coffers of the Raja were filled with gold. Centuries passed and the country became richer and richer. At last, during the reign of Shantikar a golden temple was constructed. The place was very sacred.

(It is said that rods of iron, that happened to touch the temple walls were transformed into pure gold.)

Shiva, the god of destruction and procreation, was then living in Kedarkhand, a mountainous area to the west of Nepal. It was at this time that the Pandavas were advised by Rishi Vyas to proceed to the Himalayas for a *darshan* of Shiva to expiate the sin of *Gotra hatya*. The Pandavas went to Kedarkhand to be absolved of their transgression by the Lord of mountains. They got a glimpse of Shiva in the Nag Tibba Ranges and set out in pursuit. Shiva, who did not wish to pardon the murderers easily became invisible at a place which came to be called *Gupta-kashi*, or the hiding place. Thereafter, Shiva assumed the form of a buffalo and fled to the higher hills. The Pandavas, privy to this change, followed close behind. Near the present site of Shri Kedarnath temple (still visited by many Nepalese), the divine buffalo dived into the ground. But Bhim, the mightiest of the Pandavas prevented the buffalo's escape by holding onto its tail. The Pandavas were given a *darshan* and absolved of their sin.

The head of the divine buffalo surfaced in the holy land of Nepal, in the heart of the capital town of Kantipur. The people were overjoyed at the appearance of Shiva and constructed a temple to honour him. After the arrival of Pashupatinath, all the gods and goddesses began to come to Kantipur for a *darshan* of Shiva. When *Kalpavriksha*, the tree of heaven heard the praises of Pashupatinath, he assumed human form and came to Kantipur to pray to the lord. He joined a procession that was on its way to the temple of Shiva. But Mahadeva, from whom nothing is hidden revealed this secret identity of Kalpavriksha to one of his devotees and told him that this was a marvellous opportunity of forcing Kalpavriksha to make his home in the capital. The devotee of Shiva recognized Kalpavriksha and caught hold of him. The tree of heaven tried hard to free himself, but Shiva's devotee had been bestowed with magic powers. At last Kalpavriksha told him that he could not possibly leave the heavens—his absence would create chaos in *Trilok*—but he would grant the boon of providing hisganger. And in four days therearose a magnificent *Sal* tree in the centre of the city. From this the devotee of Shiva carved out a beautiful house which came to be called *Kashtam-*

*andapam** or Kathmandu, literally meaning the House of Wood. As time passed, the name of Kantipur was changed to Kathmandu. The town was built and rebuilt as the houses grew old and dilapidated but the temple of Shiva and the Kashtamandapam remained firm bearing all the vicissitudes of nature.

**Kashtamandapam* is a double-roofed pagoda structure which still stands between the Darbar square and the temple of the Kumari. It is believed to have been built in the reign of Lakshmi Narsingh Mall in about A. D. 1596. The pagoda has a stone image of Gorakhnath, the ruling deity of the Gorkhas.

Legend of Karunamaya

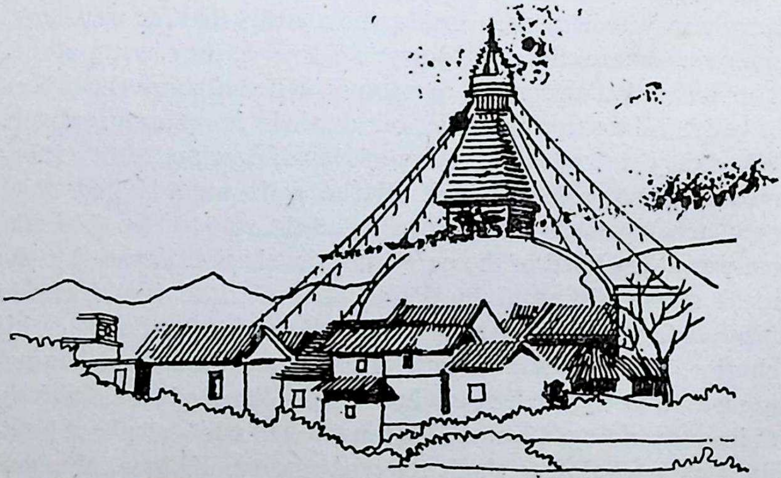
The God of Mercy

THIS IS a story of the time when Karunamaya, the god of mercy, was living in Tibet and had not yet migrated to Nepal. The country was in the grip of a severe and prolonged drought. Both men and beasts suffered greatly. The people did everything possible. They made sacrifices, performed *tantric* rituals and propitiated the gods and demons alike. But nothing helped. Finally, the *raj-purohit* (royal priest), Bandhu Datta, was consulted. The arrival of Karunamaya, the god of mercy, into Nepal, he advised, could alone save the situation. ‘Where does he live? We shall go and fetch him,’ said the people. ‘You cannot reach him,’ Bandhu Datta continued, ‘he dwells in the land of demons. There are many rivers and obstacles in the way. Only men of true religion or men of means, like kings, can reach the place.’ ‘Let us go to the king,’ said the people. ‘No, that also will not do,’ Bandhu Datta replied. ’The present king will be of no help. You will have to seek out his father, the old king in his temple.’

The old king Narender Dev had abdicated the throne in favour of his son Bir Dev. Whereas Narender Dev was a man of religion, his son was a cruel treacherous despot. Many openly wishpered that the twelve year drought was a consequence of the vileness of their ruler. Bad kings bring disasters to their subjects. The people went to the old king, Narender Dev and begged him to accompany them to the abode of Karunamaya, the god of mercy. The king declined saying that as he had renounced the world; he was unaffected by suffering or joy. The men pleaded with him in the name of God and mercy, and the king relented. After due deliberations between Narender Dev and the *raj-purohit*, it was decided to include Nag Dev Karkoktak in the party. He would, it was felt, help overcome the water obstacles. A holy man of Patan was also included in the entourage, both to carry presents for Karunamaya and to appease the more troublesome demons. Nag Raj Karkoktak was approached and told of the mission. He demurred saying that because of his slow speed he would not be able to keep pace with the party. Their problem, however, was resolved by persuading him to assume miniature form and be carried in the pocket of the priest. All preparations over, they set out at last on their long and arduous journey. Nag Dev Karkoktak helped them across many obstacles, adding greatly to the speed of the party. He would assume forms of huge serpents and provide impromptu bridges over rivers, *nullahs* and ditches. With each successful crossing Karkoktak would re-enter the pocket of the priest. After a very long and tedious journey frought with risks, they reached the land of demons. The god of mercy, Karunamaya was staying in a well-guarded palace. Ferocious demons on all sides prevented the party from reaching Karunamaya. When his mother, who was a she demon, came to know the purpose of the mission from Nepal, she spread her bed in front of her son's door to prevent any possibility of his leaving his native place voluntarily or otherwise.

Meanwhile all the rivers and wells of Nepal had dried up completely. Men were dying for lack of water. Time was running out and the party outside Karunamaya's palace was greatly distressed at its inability to reach the god of mercy. At last, Bandhu Datta undertook a severe penance and performed religious rituals, which constrained Karunamaya to appear before them. But there was another hurdle to cross. Had Karunamaya deigned to cross his mother's body he would have been afflicted with leprosy. He therefore, transformed himself into a bee and flew to the place where the priest was performing the powerful rituals that had drawn Karunamaya out. He entered the utensil kept ready for him and Narender Dev promptly secured the lid. They were prevented from leaving by Karunamaya's mother who attacked them with her army of demons. The priest Bandhu Datta called in the gods for help, and a fierce fight ensued between the *devas* and the *danavas.* The demons took to their heels, but Karunamaya's mother lingered on. Bandhu Datta explained her the reason for which they were taking Karunamaya away. She pleaded that Karunamaya be allowed to occasionally come back within a certain distance from where she could see him. To help Karunamaya, who was inside the utensil, find his way back, she gave some seeds to the party to throw as they went along. The trees that sprouted came to be called *deodar*, 'the timber of gods'. The party finally set out on their long journey back. When they entered the territory of Nepal, Bandhu Datta performed a unique *pooja* to which all the gods were invited. And they accompanied the procession all the way to Nepal. Brahma was at the head of the party on his chariot drawn by the royal swans, followed by Vayu, the ruler of winds, astride his fleet-footed stag. Above them all, rode the Sun, on his chariot drawn by seven horses, dispelling darkness and bestowing warmth and brightness. Indra, the king of gods was in the centre riding *Airavata,* his four-tusked white elephant holding a parasol aloft to shade the whole party. Kubera, the god of wealth, spread riches along the route.

As they were going along, one of the gods uttered the syllable *bhu.* Bandhu Datta immediately realized the significance of this utterance—that the place where *bhu* was intoned (by the god) was to be treated as the birth place of Karunamaya. Accordingly, the vessel in which Karunamaya was brought was enshrined in the temple that was built there. As the party went further, a discussion was held about the most suitable dwelling for Karunamaya. Each man clamoured to have the god reside in his town. As they arrived at Igatyag near Patan, crowds of people collected in droves to welcome the god, and everyone agreed that the wish of the people should prevail. By popular will Karunamaya was installed at Patan. The drought disappeared, and prosperity came back to Nepal. From that day Karunamaya,* has been the *Ishta-deva* of Nepal.



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*The other names of Karunamaya are Banga Deo, Machhendranath and Swayambhu Nath. Please see Legend of Swayambhu Nath, 'The Temple of Dew Drops'.

Legend of the New Year

'SHOULD I keep this bit of worthless sand, or shall I have it thrown into a dung heap ? Your powers of prophecy after all, appear to have been taken away from you by the goddess. You have let me down this time,' Raja Anand Mull said to his court astrologer, Sidhiwanth.

'I am deeply perturbed, my Lord. It is really strange that the prophecy has not come true. I had meditated again and again and fully examined all aspects before advising you. Frankly, I suspect foul play,' replied Sidhiwanth, his face turning pale.

This is a true story and dates back to the time when a new calendar was introduced in Nepal. The older people say that the event dates back to the year 879 A. D. The name 'Nepal' is, in fact mentioned for the first time around this period. The country was then divided into two sister states ruled by two brothers. Jaya Deva Mull, the elder brother, had his capital at Kathmandu, and Anand Mull, the younger, had the seat of his government at Bhatgaon. Anand Mull had a court astrologer named Sidhiwanth, who was renowned for his gift of prophecy. His predictions never backfired. It was said that he had received the blessings of Rishi Bhrigu on account of his devotion and prolonged *tapasya*.

One day Sidhiwanth dreamt of huge heaps of gold. After thoroughly studying the books on astrology, and prolonged meditation on the significance of the dream, he told Raja Anand Mull that at a particular time sand collected from the holy Bhagmati River would turn into gold. The Raja dispatched some men to bring the sand. The specified period passed, but the predicted transmutation did not occur. Sidhiwanth was nonplussed. He consulted the scriptures again and concluded that there was indubiously some foul play. He told the Raja about his apprehensions and insisted that the book was correct. He said, 'I am certain that the sand was transformed into gold. It is, however, possible that the labourers employed to fetch it somehow heard of my prediction and hid the blessed sand somewhere. It is all a matter of luck. I will tell you of a mythological event to illustrate my point.' And Sidhiwanth narrated the oft-repeated story of a devotee of Shiva, who missed a great treasure because of ill luck.

Once when Shiva and Parvati were taking a round of *srishti*, Parvati noticed a devotee reciting *Om namo Shivaye, Om namo Shivaye*. She asked Mahadeva to bless him with something, Shiva replied that he could not give his devotee anything more than what his luck would hold. But Parvati insisted. The devotee was an old man of eighty five whose eyesight was failing. Shiva placed large heaps of gold, diamonds and jewels on the way for him to pick and stood behind a bush with Parvati to see what the devotee would take from the huge pile of wealth that lay on his path.

Almost simultaneously a thought crossed the mind of the devotee. He knew his eyes were failing him, and it was likely that he would soon become completely blind. It was not out of place, therefore, to be prepared to face the dark and gloomy days ahead. Accordingly he tied a piece of cloth over his eyes to practise moving as a blind man. Feigning blindness he passed by the fabulous treasure kept for him by Shiva. He did touch the heap of diamonds without knowing what he had touched, or missed, and went his way. Sidhiwanth then concluded, 'I am sure, your majesty, something similar has happened to the gold that was.' 'No,' insisted the king emphatically, 'your prediction was wrong.' The Raja went away, and Sidhiwanth felt deeply humiliated. He set fire to his books of prophecies and fainted. Anand Mull ordered the useless sand thrown out. As he watched the disposal of sand his eyes were held by the glitter of gold, some of which was clinging to the baskets that contained the sand. He summoned the labourers and interrogated them. They told him that when they were returning with the sand, they met a man named Shankadhar, who was known to one of them. Out of courtesy Shankadhar invited them for dinner, which they were glad to accept. After many drinks and a hearty meal, Shankadhar asked them about their strange load, and told them that he required some sand for construction work. He requested them to leave their load with him and collect some more sand on their way. The labourers agreed, for they had eaten his salt, and unloaded entire amount at his place except the few grains that still clung to the baskets.

Whilst Anand Mull was making these enquiries, a messenger came from Kathmandu with a message that a man named Shankadhar had been blessed with lot of gold. He had requested that all debts of the sister states be paid, and the gold utilized for the betterment of the masses. A similar request was sent to Jaya Deva Mull. The two states then combined to form a territory named Nepal and Jaya Deva commemorated this event by starting a new calendar. Even now the New Year's day is celebrated with prayers to the God who can turn sand into gold.

Legend of Swayambhu Nath

The Temple of Dew Drops

THE DEW drops provided water for the construction of the beautiful temple of Shakya Muni. It is variously called as the temple of Shakya Muni, and the Temple of Dew Drops.

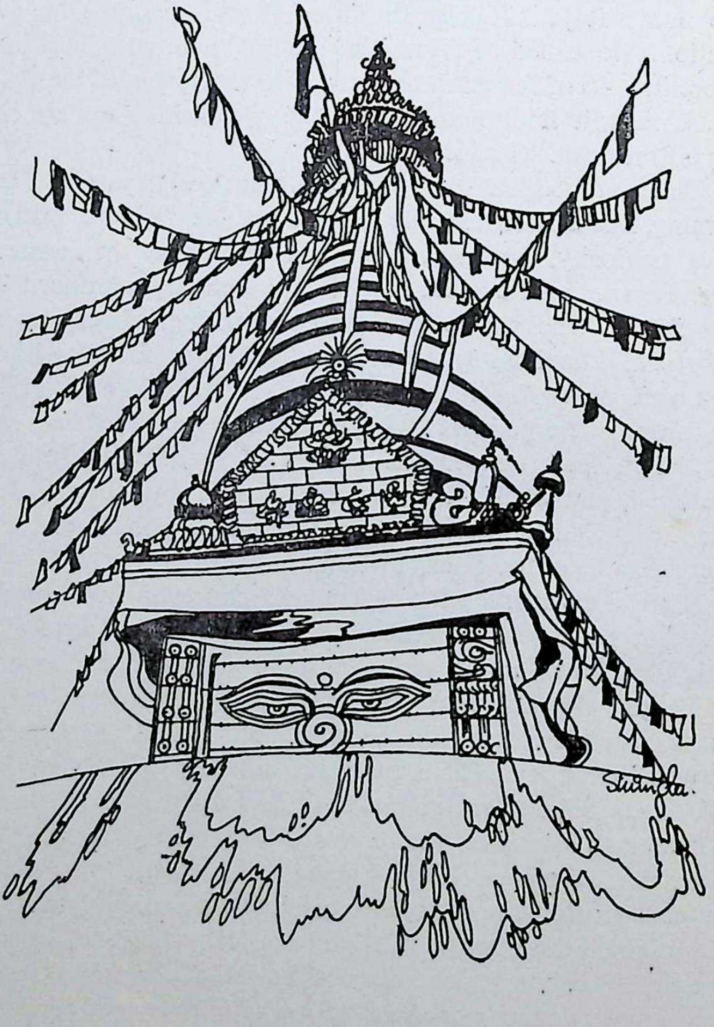
The temple of Swayambhu Nath is located in the charming sylvan surroundings on a hillock about 250 feet high at a distance of about three kilometres west of Kathmandu. It is one of the oldest and most glorious of Buddhist *chaitya*s (*temple*). The main *stupa* is a solid hemisphere of brick and earth supporting a lofty conical spire capped by a pinnacle of copper. On all four sides of the spire, are the all-seeing-eyes of Lord Buddha. The *stupa* is equally sacred to the Hindus and the Buddhists. Legend has it that the lotus of Buddha first blossomed at the exact spot where the shrine now stands. The large hemisphere of the *stupa* represents the *garbha*, or the seat of all creation. The creation of the temple has its own story to tell.

In olden times, a Raja constructed beautiful aqueducts over a spring at the junction of busy routes to commemorate his name. This was a common practice, and it was felt that the path to heaven (for the builder of these springs) would be made considerably easier by the blessings of thirsty men. The outlets were exquisitely designed and carved dragon heads. However, at the opening ceremony, the Raja was dismayed to find that the aqueducts were dry. And the people who had thronged to see the inauguration of the spring, laughed out of the other sides of their mouths. The Raja was embarrassed and upset, and attributed this failure to the wrath of gods. The royal priests suggested human sacrifice as propitiation. The noble Raja sat deep in thought, and finally came to a solution. He called his son and said, 'Tomorrow morning, before the rise of the morning star, go to the spring of the dragons. You will find a man lying there. Sacrifice him by cutting off his head. Here is the sword.'

The son nodded his head in consent and departed. Next morning, like a dutiful son he carried out his father's instructions. Curiosity, however, prompted him to see the sacrificed man. He was aghast to see that he had actually sacrificed his own father. The prince was overcome with grief and remorse and was also terrified by the wrath of gods. He fasted without food and water for many days, till he fell asleep with sheer exhaustion. The goddess Bajrajagini came in his dream and said, 'You have obeyed the orders of your father. Had you disobeyed, you would have been a sinner. By obeying him, you are still a sinner. To expiate your sins, you should construct a temple of the Shakya Muni.'

The prince awoke with a start. He collected his courtiers and ordered the construction of a temple. The days of his trials were, however, not yet over. Soon after the construction was begun the kingdom was afflicted by a severe drought. The dry spell lasted for many years. The rivers, springs and the wells went dry. The countryside turned into a desert. Men had to go to far off mountains to fetch some water. There was no water to continue the construction of the temple. The prince devised a plan. He had many white sheets spread near the construction site at night to catch the morning dew. However minimal the amount, it helped accelerate the rate of construction. But even this was not the end of the prince's woes. One night, a demon came in the form of a boar and damaged the temple. This was repaired. But the following night, the construction was damaged again. This continued for many nights till the men discovered the villain and chased him out.

At last the temple was completed, and it stands to this day. It is called 'The Temple of Dew Drops'. (For the second origin of the temple, read the Legend of Karunamaya, the God of Mercy). It is said that the sins of men are washed off by a single visit to this shrine.



Legend of Singh Sartha Bahu

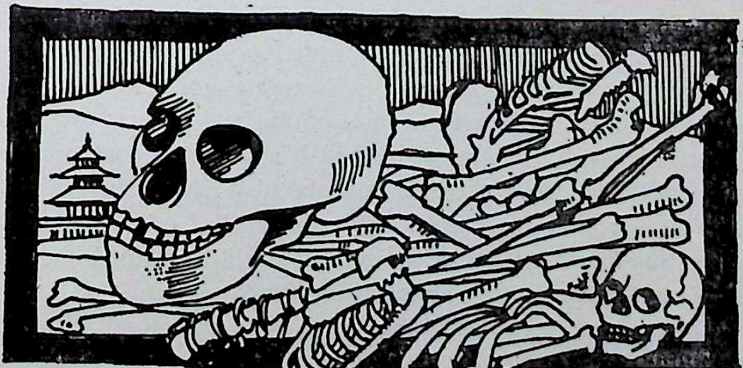
WOE TO those men who fall an easy prey to the charms of women without bothering to know what lies behind their appearances. This is precisely what happened to the many companions of Singh Sartha Bahu. They finally came to grief and met ignoble and horrible ends. Singh Sartha Bahu was a merchant of Kathmandu who later rose to become the king.

Long, long ago when Tibet was inhabited by the man-eating giants, demons, ghosts and witches, a merchant named Singh Sartha Bahu decided to travel northwards to explore fresh markets for his wares and make a fortune. He made extensive preparations for his travel to the distant, unknown lands. He took many salesmen along, and ponies full of saleable items of a great variety, ranging from household goods to gaudy garments for children and women. After many days of hard march in snowy, inhospitable terrain they reached Tibet. From a distance they saw the domes of a temple and moved towards it. When they came closer, they discovered that it was the golden temple of Shakya Muni in the heart of a town. They decided to establish a base there before proceeding further. Singh Sartha Bahu rented some quarters and settled down with his men. By evening, many beautiful girls came to that town. The guests were honoured and entertained with a song and dance routine. The Nepalese were greatly amused to see all this. After the show, the women volunteered to stay with them. What more could they ask for? They were told that it was customary for young girls in that country to entertain their guests both in and out of bed. Each man chose a mistress and settled happily in the town. They were so lost in sybaritic pleasures, that they completely forgot about their mission.

Sartha Bahu was happy that his men were enjoying a well deserved holiday after a long arduous journey. Soon they would have to be on their way. But any suggestion to continue the journey further was met with protests and requests to stay a few more days. At times, the men even refused outright and threatened to leave their jobs if they were interrupted in their pleasures. Sartha Bahu was the only one who did not forget his god and followed the ritual of daily prayer.

One day while Sartha Bahu was busy with his prayer he was visited by Karunamaya, the god of mercy. Bunga Deo warned him that the beautiful woman with whom he cohabited was actually a *boksini*, a flesh eating witch, that he had lost his perception because he had been blinded by lust. And the kind god lent him his divine eyes. Singh Sartha Bahu went to his bed chamber and was horrified to find his sleeping mistress in all her appalling ugliness. He trembled as he gazed at her protruding eyes and teeth and reversed feet. Singh Sartha Bahu fell at the feet of Karunamaya and begged for deliverance. Karunamaya told him to go to the river with all his men early the following morning. There, they would see a horse which would take them away from these accursed women to a safe place. He warned him, however, not to look back, if he, or his men were to escape the evil spell of the witches. Should anybody look back, Karunamaya cautioned, he would be thrown off the horse and devoured by them. Singh Sartha Bahu remembered his earlier vain entreaties with his men to move out of the town and asked Karunamaya to help him convince them of the fate that awaited them. The god of mercy then told him to take them to a mound west of the town and they would all be adequately convinced.

The following morning, the merchant collected all his men and told them what Karunamaya had revealed to him. The men expressed their incredulity, and loathed to leave their pleasures. He then took them to the mound which contained a huge pile of human skulls and bones. They trembled at the sight and meekly followed Singh Sartha Bahu to the river. A white steed awaited them and they all mounted it. Soon the charger took to the air and started flying. The men were happy that they had been saved from a certain and horrible death. They had gone only a little distance when many sweet female voices were heard entreating them to return. So delicate and inviting were those voices that some men were tempted to look back. They fell off the horse and were immediately devoured, their skulls falling on the mound of bones. In spite of this ghastly end of some of their companions, others also fell pray to the enticing female vioces. Singh Sartha Bahu alone reached Kathmandu. His mistress followed him to Kathmandu, and complained to the king against Sartha Bahu's behaviour. The king ordered an investigation, but during the proceedings he himself fell a prey to the charms of the woman, and kept her as his mistress. In due course, she predictably killed and ate the king. Singh Sartha Bahu had by then acquired the power of killing and warding off ghosts. He went to the palace and killed the witch, and the grateful people of Kathmandu crowned him king. He chose a queen with utmost care, and they both ruled wisely for many years.



Legend of the Kokla Pheasant

EVEN NOW his agonized cries can be heard, '*kata lukayo, kata lukayo*?' (Where have I hidden it? Where have I hidden it?) What is worse is that no one comes to help him locate his lost treasure, nor even to sympathize with him. The bird warbles away, asking '*kata lukoyo*? *kata lukayo*?' It is believed that if a man eats the meat of this bird, he loses his memory. In fact, the meat is given to an enemy by subterfuge, so that he loses his memory and wanders about shouting aimlessly, '*Kata lukayo*?, *kata lukayo*?'

This is the true story of a heartless money lender, who charged his clients exorbitant rates of interest. The poorer the client, the greater the rate of interest. Many of them were unable to clear their debts and ended as his bonded labourers. He was also a congenital miser who enjoyed the feel of money, the mounting figure more than the gains it could fetch for him. All his ill-gotten wealth was concealed under the ground.

His greed grew with the years. The people, tired of his usury, prayed to the gods to deliver them from his excesses. Their cries of suffering at last reached the ears of the gods who decided to teach the usurer a lesson. Indra, lord of the clouds and thunder, sent devastating rains. The down-pour was almost like the deluge when Vishnu incarnated himself as a fish to save the world. The incessant rain caused a number of landslides. Unfortunately for the miser, the recurring landslides pushed his buried treasure elsewhere. After the rains he dug at hundred and one places to look for his wealth, but there was no trace of the hoard. So great was his grief that he neither ate nor drank. He moved from hill to hill shouting, '*kata lukayo, kata lukayo*?' (Where have I hidden it? Where have I hidden it?) He died a miserable death. None volunteered to perform his last rites, and he was, therefore, barred from being born as a human being. He became the bird Kokla, and, still flies from hill to hill and tree to tree shouting in agony, '*Kata lukayo*? *Kata lukayo*?'

Legend of Jeevan Amrit

The Nectar of Life

THROUGHOUT THE ages the one consuming desire of men has been to acquire the nectar of life to revive the dead. Short of that, men have been craving for power to be able to communicate with the dead. And Bandhu Acharya of Gola was no exception.

The story goes that Bandhu Acharya spent a lot of time in the company of mendicants who were practitioners of *tantra*. In the course of time his *tantric* practices helped him to acquire many secrets and powers. He, however, had a consuming passion for mastery over life and death by the acquisition of the nectar of life. One day, as he sat meditating and performing the *tantric* rites, in the temple of the *Devi*, she appeared in person and said, 'Your devotion is deep and persistent and the sincerity of your desire, beyond question. I will fulfil your cravings on the condition that you do what I ask you to do.' Bandhu agreed. The Devi was pleased and said, 'All right. I want you to sacrifice the person now standing behind you at my altar?' This indeed was a simple task. In those days, it was a common practice for men to offer themselves for sacrifice for the good of the king and his kingdom. Bandhu Acharya thought that the Devi had really been kind and asked for too minor an offering. Overjoyed, he looked back without the slightest hesitation and found his only son standing beind him. There was, however, no going back on his word, and he sacrificed his son at the altar. The goddess was pleased and told him to go to the place where he would find the nectar of life, which would enable him to revive his dead son.

Full of hope, Bandhu Acharya carried the body of his son and put it in a box in his private room. He told his wife that he was leaving for some distant place on urgent business. He forbade her to enter his private apartment, or open the box in his absence. Then hurriedly packing some essentials he left for the place indicated by the goddess.

The mother waited for the return of her only son for many days. At last she began to get apprehensive about his safety. She could not keep her mind off her child and constantly worried about him. Something within, some uncanny intuition of a mother, told her that her son was no more and that her husband knew of it. One night she had a strange dream in which her husband was seen carrying the dead body of their son. She got up with a start and went straight to the private apartment of Bandhu Acharya, and opened the box he had forbidden her to. To her horror, she found the dead body of her son. She wailed loud and long, waking up the neighbours, who came rushing to her house. In her agony, she went on cursing her husband, and her luck for having married such a man. The rumour spread that there was foul play and the son had obviously been killed by the father who had lost his head. Soon, all the relatives reached her house. Her own relatives arrived from Kathmandu, from Gola came her husband's relations. Now, as is common, they eyed each other with suspicion and opinions differed on every conceivable matter. The men from Gola argued that they must wait for the boy's father, but the woman's relatives from Kathmandu disagreed to it. The boy was no more, they argued, and there was no need to create obstacles on his journey to heaven. His soul, they felt, must be wandering disconsolately and cursing the inconsiderate relatives. In any case, Bandhu had gone mad and there was no need to wait for him to perform the last rites. Bandhu's people, on the other hand, strongly felt that the father must be given a chance to have a last look at his son.

The lady of the house favoured her own people whose wish finally prevailed, and the boy was assigned to the holy fires.

Bandu Acharya came back with the nectar of life, full of hope that he would revive his only son and gain knowledge of the world beyond where his own son had been. Excited at this prospect, he went straight to the box. It was empty. The nectar was useless now. Bandhu was disgusted and went to his people at Gola and severely reprimanded them. On coming to know the insolence and high-headedness of his wife and her people, he decided not to go back to them. By the power of *tantra* he became invisible and was never seen again.

To this day the people of Gola stage a mock funeral every year to commemorate the story of Bandhu Acharya, and hurl vociferous curses on the people of Kathmandu. Some wise people are also heard to say that in the hope of getting the nectar of life, why make this life miserable?

Jadu Ra Pooja

Magic and Worship

NEPAL THE land of temples, has been eulogized as the Kingdom of Gods. Its capital Kathmandu houses *Kalpa Vriksha*, the celestial tree. In such a land, there is no place for magic. In any case, can magic vie with the power bestowed by the worship of God?

Once a magician of Bengal, a country lying south-east of Nepal came to Kathmandu to show his tricks and earn a livelihood. He had a large stock of tricks which greatly amused the young and old alike. He was a great draw for the younger generation who just did not tire of seeing his repertoire of tricks. The magician had the power to cut his tongue without shedding a drop of blood. He would then sew it back and resume normal conversation. He would break a thread to pieces, throw it on the ground and ask any spectator to pick one piece. Incredibly, all the little pieces would join and form the entire length of the original thread. He would then make a spectator lie down and cover him with a white sheet. The recitation of some *mantras* would make the man levitate. The magician would even ask a child to pass under the man suspended in mid-air. His *tour de force*, however, was to cut a man into pieces and make him whole again.

One day, a temple priest was distressed by the late arrival of his disciples. On enquiry, one of them replied, 'What is there that God or His worship can achieve? The magician of Bengal has enamoured us by his powers. He can do almost anything and it appears that the gods and deities are to his command and do his bidding.' He then went on to explain each trick with great relish, even exaggerating a little. At last he said, 'We have decided to leave the temple and become the disciples of the magician.'

The priest stopped them with great difficulty and requested them to stay only for one more day. He then handed over a basket of cane to them and asked them to fetch some water in it. 'How can a basket of cane contain water?' said one. 'At least try. It may,' the priest replied.

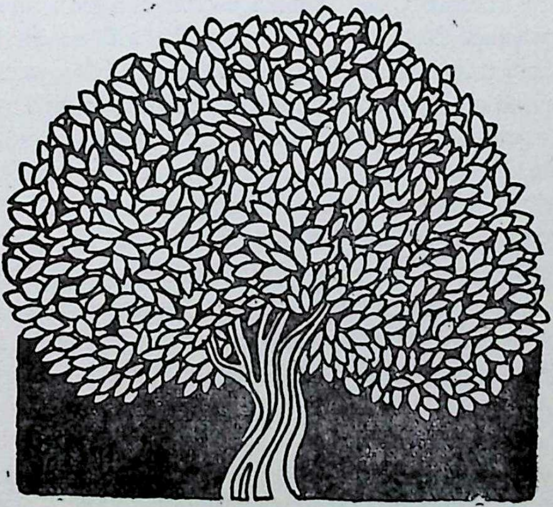
The boys went to the nearest spring and kept the basket underneath the aqueduct to be filled. They were surprised to see that the water did not leak out of the pores. They were coming back when the magician saw them and addressed them thus, 'Hey where are you going? Why haven't you come to learn the wonderful tricks of magic?' 'No, we won't come now. See, our Guru is also a magician. He can make a cane basket hold water,' replied one.

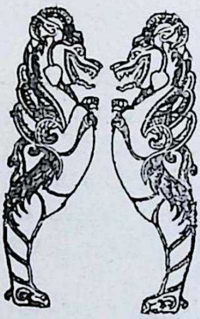
The magician recited a *mantra* and hit the basket with a stone. The boys were amazed to see the water spill out without wetting them. The boys were convinced that the magician of Bengal was more powerful than the priest. They went back to the priest and throwing the basket on the ground, departed unceremoniously. They went straight to the magician, where a huge crowd had already gathered to watch him perform. The magician was busy with his star performance of cutting a man to pieces. He was in the process of reassembling the man when a *garuda* swooped down and carried the heart of the man in its talons. The swiftness of events astounded the magician. He was however, greatly alarmed because the dead man could not be revived without his heart. As he sat there puzzled, there was an *akashvani* (voice from heaven), 'Go to the temple of God and request the priest to return the heart'.

Followed by the spectators, the magician rushed to the temple and was greeted by a strange sight. The wife of the priest was cooking food using one of her own legs as firewood. She told the magician that her husband was out grazing the cattle. The magician ran to the fields where he saw the priest holding down thick branches with his toe while the goats feasted merrily. On enquiry, the magician related the whole story to the priest and requested him for the heart. The priest said, 'Please hold these branches down for the herd while I go and get the heart from the *garuda*.'

The magician gripped the branches with both his hands, but he could not keep them down. He was flung up with them and was seen dangling in mid air to the great amusement of the huge crowd of spectators who had followed him. The priest shouted from below, 'Now climb down and go to the temple of God and pray. Then close your eyes and you will find the heart lying before you.'

The magician came down and hurried to the temple. He sat down to pray and when he opened his eyes he saw the heart lying at the feet of the diety. He revived the man, packed his wares quickly and left for Bengal. He was never again seen in Kathmandu.





Legend of the Dancers of Jhala

MANY PEOPLE who have visited the temple of Jhala claim to have seen the performance of a headless dancer, and heard the anguished cries of a man in distress. The story goes that the dancers of the village Jhala were famous far and wide. They were invited to perform at marriages and child births, and also when people died at a very advanced age—old enough, in short, to be great grandparents. The people, however, looked askance at them, and avoided meeting them alone. It was rumoured, and not without cause, that the temple was a sacrificial alter where the dancers beheaded unwary wayfarers, and offered them to the goddess. They would go for a performance and lure an innocent man to accompany them back by promises of teaching him the more intricate dance steps. After a few days, they would take the man to the temple and mercilessly behead him. Their notoriety spread even further than their fame.

As the news of their evil deeds spread, people began to shun them completely. This naturally made it difficult for them to find any victims to be sacrificed at the altar of the goddess. By constant deceit and treachery, however, they did manage to lure some innocent passersby, or men from remote villages for their bloody carnage. Soon this source was also exhausted. They were therefore, compelled to follow more drastic methods. Some of them would forcibly abduct a lonely man and sacrifice him. As the news spread, people took to moving in pairs, or in groups,

One day the dancers saw a farmer who, on occasion, worked alone in his fields. Often after hard work he would relax and fall into slumber. He was obviously the ideal choice for the blood thirsty dancers. They, therefore, kept him under constant surveillance, and made no alternative arrangements till the day of the sacrifice. But the farmer got wind of their evil intentions and became vigilant. Whenever he saw any dancer from Jhala approach him, he would draw his *Khukri* and begin to hone it on a stone. This would keep the intruder at bay. Soon the farmer grew sick of the unprovoked and uncalled for attentions of the dancers and devised an ingenious plan to rid himself and the community of this menace. He collected all the thorny bushes he could lay his hands on and arranged them in the shape of a reclining man and covered this effigy with his sheet. It took him all night to prepare this decoy. He grunted his satisfaction and waited to welcome the dancers of Jhala.

The dancers were delighted to see the farmer relaxing, his face covered by a sheet. They were looking for just such an opportunity. They came in strength and fell upon him. The man who fell upon the effigy first cried with anguish as he was pricked by the thorns. The other dancers took these cries to be that of the farmer, and fell upon him with greater frenzy. Unwittingly their helpless companion was pushed deeper into the thorns till his loud cries sank into a whisper, then ceased altogether. In the melee, the farmer came silently from behind and severed the head of one dancer.

These are the ghosts whom the visitors to the temple at Jhala claim to have heard and seen.

The Mapa Guru of Kathmandu

KATHMANDU is the holy city where Pashupatinath dwells, a city where the *Kalpavriksha* has contributed his wood for the construction of *Kashtamadapam*. Near the town is the alter of Mapa Guru. The residents of Kathmandu sacrifice a buffalo every year, and offer enormous quantities of cooked rice to fulfil their promise to the Guru. He, in turn, rids them of ghosts, goblins, spooks and witches. No demons can, therefore, ever bother the residents of Kathmandu.

Legend has it that many centuries ago there lived a man called Kesh Chander in the city. He was the only child of a fabulously rich man. In due course he inherited the large fortune of his father, and it turned his head. He sacked all the old, faithful servants and employees who looked after his state. He took to evil ways and consequently, fell on evil days. He drank heavily and spent most of his time in the company of women of easy virtue. The rest of his time was spent in gambling. As the old saying goes that a droplet taken each day will empty even a perennially full lake, his vast but limited coffers were being gradually depleted and a day came when he became penniless. His friends, who were, and mostly are, lovers of fair weather, left him. Women, who swore undying love, pushed him out of their apartments, calling him mad. He was left only with his house, an ancestral property for many generations. On the hope that he would win his money back, he sold the house and gambled the money as a last resort to regaining his lost wealth. He lost, and became both homeless and penniless. Devoid of shelter and money and bereft of friends, he thought of his sister who lived in a far-off village. He reached her house in tatters. She welcomed him with open arms and provided him with food and a clean set of clothing. Partial comfort again revived his latent desire to get rich overnight. He wanted to make yet another splash at changing his fortunes. He had, however, no courage to borrow money from his sister. His desire to gamble, however, got better of him and he sold the costly utensils in which he was served food by his sister. But he lost the money again. Evil habits die hard. He tried again and lost again.

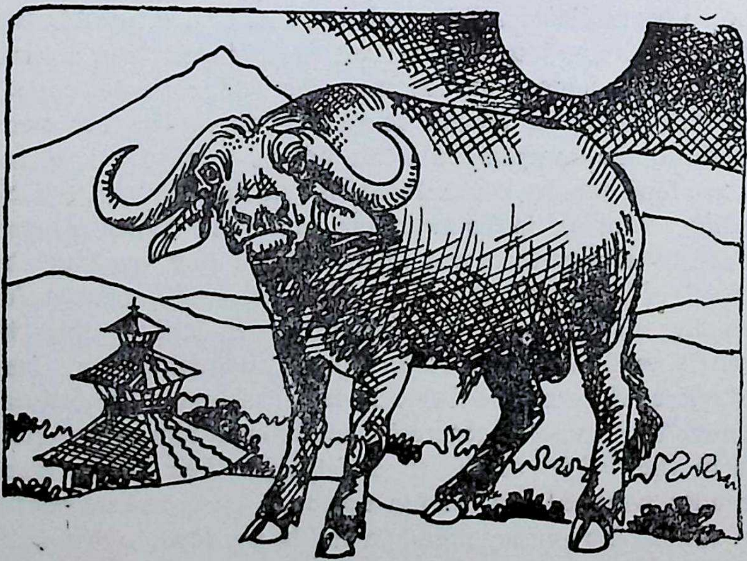
His sister soon discovered the cause of missing utensils and was terribly embarrassed. She admonished him in camera, and told him that his chicanery would make her lose face with her husband. Brothers were supposedly a source of pride for their sisters, could she take any in him? She now served him food on banana leaves. This reprimand chastized him and he left the house without touching his food, promising never to return.

He felt hungry on the way. He had a single copper coin with which he bought some stale food. He then went straight to the Swayambhu Nath hill to pray. He kept his meagre food on a rock and closed his eyes for prayers. A flock of *dhikur* (doves), in the meantime, came and settled around the food. Amongst them was a pair of doves that lived in the temple of Pashupatinath. When Kesh Chander opened his eyes after his prayers, he saw the doves hungrily eyeing the food. Notwithstanding his own hunger, he took pity on them and offered them his food. The doves of Pashupatinath were very pleased by this act of generosity and brought him gold equivaent to the weight of the food eaten by their flock. Kesh Chander wrapped the gold in a piece of cloth and set out for his town. The journey tired him and he sat down to rest under the shade of a banyan tree. Unfortunately, a notoriously bloodthirsty demon called Mapa had his dwelling on the same tree.

Kesh Chander heard his grunts and told him that he was a very rich man, he would, if the ogre spared him his life, feed him a buffalo and lots of rice everyday. Mapa agreed and promised that he in turn would keep Kesh Chander's residence free of ghosts and evil spirits.

Kesh Chander came back and rebought his house. He bought many plates of silver and gold and sent them to his sister, along with many other presents. This greatly pleased the goddess Lakshmi who bestowed him with greater and greater profits in his business. He gave large sums to various temples and fed the poor. His friends and women sought to cultivate him again but he had learnt his lesson.

He kept his promise to Mapa Guru, and fed him one buffalo and lots of rice everyday. He did this till the last day of Mapa Guru on earth. After his death, Kesh Chander built a temple in his honour. The people of Kathmandu still make the offering of a buffalo and rice once each year to commemorate the last day of Mapa Guru in Kathmandu.



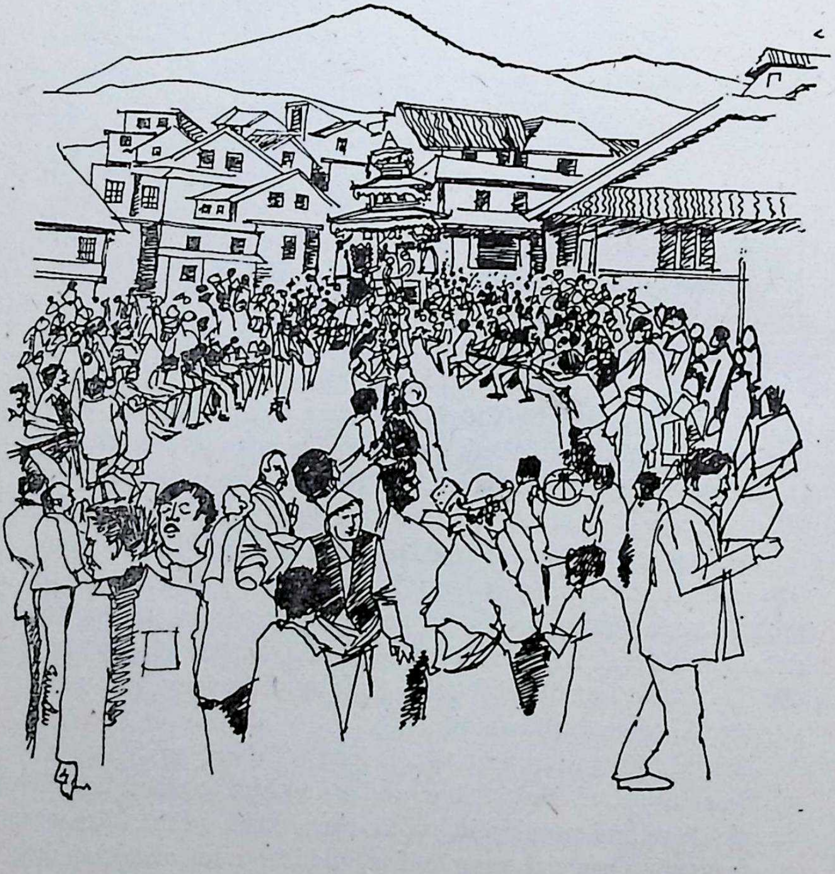
Legend of Bhairvikot

NEPAL is the land of temples and festivals. If you are in Nepal during the festival of Bhairvi Devi, see that you include it in your itinerary.

Bhairvikot is located in the Argha disrict. It is famous for the temple of Bhairvi Devi. People come from far and wide to pay homage to the Devi. The desires of the devotees are said to be fulfilled by a pilgrimage to the shrine. In earlier times, the temple was called Aglo Danda, or the high hills. Legend has it that Rishi Santonu meditated on these hills for many years. At last Bhairvi Devi came to him in a dream. She told him of a place where her statue lay buried in the ground and asked him to disinter it, an act that would bestow great merit on him. The *rishi* awoke and started to dig where the Devi had asked him to. Sure enough he found the statue which was bright and beautiful.

The *rishi* began to pray to this icon of the Devi. And the goddess appeared before him and asked him to establish her temple there and worship her with the Argha plant. Santonu constructed a special temple for goddess and ordained her statue there. The *rishi* worshipped her with the *argha* plant till the day he died. And the area came to be called Argha.

Twice a year, on *Ashwin Ashtami* and *Chaitra Ashtami*. thousands of pilgrims come here to worship the *Devi*. During the reign of Prithvi Narayan Shah, the festival of Bhairvi Devi came to be celebrated throughout the kingdom to commemorate her arrival in the district of Argha, a custom which is still followed.



Machhendranath and Gorakhnath

THE FESTIVALS of Machhendranath and Gorakhnath are celebrated with great pomp and show throughout Nepal.

Five thousand feet above the town of Gorkha, stands the holy castle which is associated with Gorakhnath, one of the eighty-four grand patrons of *tantrism.* Guru Gorakhnath is the patron deity of Nepal. He bestowed a boon on the ruling family that they would establish their sovereignty over the entire Himalayan range. He attained divine powers after a *darshan* of Machhendranath, who was blessed by Shiva himself. Gorakhnath has, in fact, given his name to the Gorkhas.

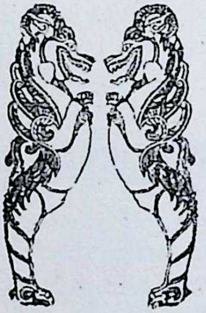
Legend has it that when Shiva was residing at Kailash Mansarovar with Parvati, she requested him for a discourse on divine knowledge. Shiva was pleased with her request and began to tell her about *Srishtirachna.* A while later, Parvati felt sleepy and dozed off. (They were on the banks of the holy lake, Mansarovar.) God Lokiteshwar (also called Bodhisatva) came to know of the narration of the *Srishtirachna*, divine knowledge by Shiva. He took the form of fish and listened to Shiva's discourse. With Parvati asleep, Lokiteshwar mumbled the expected 'yes' and 'hun' to Shiva's narration. Once when Shiva happened to glance at Parvati, he saw that she was fast asleep and realized immediately the monosyllabic replies of 'yes' and hun' were from an intruder. He was about to curse the person who had been secretly listening to his exegesis on divine knowledge when God Lokiteshwar revealed himself and begged for forgiveness. This was granted. Shiva, however, asked him to become his devotee and meditate in the Himalayas. Bodhisatva disappeared and took the shape of Machhendranath, or fish god, and retired to the Himalayas to meditate. Guru Gorakhnath was then residing in a cave in western Nepal. On learning of the divine knowledge and powers of Machhendranath he went to the Himalayas for his *darshan.* Machhendranath was in *samadhi* and, therefore, unapproachable. Guru Gorakhnath was aware that if there was any trouble in Nepal, Machhendranath would come to the rescue of her people. He, therefore, resorted to subterfuge. He caught hold of nine *nags* who were the rain spirits, and sealed them in a cave. With the *nags* imprisoned, there was no rainfall. The rivers and lakes went dry and the drought took heavy toll of human and animal life. Men prayed to Machhendranath to come to their aid. Machhendranath granted their prayers and came to Nepal. Guru Gorakhnath received his *darshan* and freed the *nags,* and rain came down in pelts. Machhendranath bestowed a boon on the people of Nepal that their land would never witness another drought. Guru Gorakhnath, who was instrumental in the grant of this boon, became the presiding deity of the country. The festivals of Machhendranath and Guru Gorakhnath are celebrated all over the country with great pomp and show.

Legend of Rurukshetra

LARGE HERDS of deer, called *ruru*, are encountered in the Gulmi district of western Nepal. People come from great distances to feed them. The entire area is called Rurukshetra. The place has holy vibrations, and is a great centre of pilgrimage. A bath in the Gandaki river is said to grant absolution.

The legend goes that once there was great *rishi* who sat in meditation for many, many years. The gods became worried and jealous of his growing powers, and sent an *apsara* to break his *samadhi*. She came to the *rishi's* hermitage and tempted him with erotic dances and lewd songs. The *rishi* fell in love with her. In due course, the *apsara* gave birth to a girl and returned to *Indralok*. The disillusioned *rishi* was deeply repentent and left the place for another one. He performed severe penances and meditated till he died. The baby girl was bought up by the *ruru* deer. When the girl grew up, she also meditated here like her father. And because of her association with the *ruru* deer, the place came to be called Rurukshetra.

People come from all over the country on *Magh Sankranti* and *Hari Syani Ekadshi* to bathe in the holy river. Feeding the ruru deer is said to neutralize the ill effects of adverse stars.

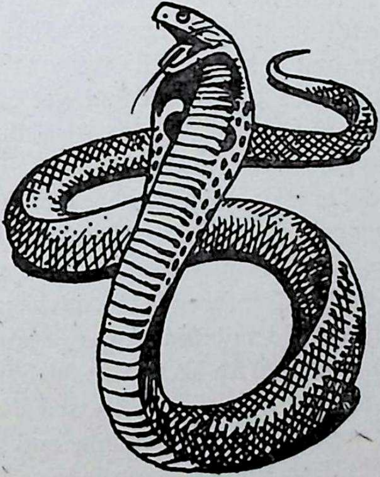


Themi ko Nag Devata

The Serpent God of Themi

IN THE remote past, there lived a python in a *tal* near Bhatgaon. It lured people by displaying his *Kuberbhandar* and devouring them. Precious items like gold and jewels would be seen floating over the water's surface, and unsuspecting wayfarers who entered the lake to recover the wealth would never come out again. Men prayed to the gods to rid them of this menace.

The news reached a mendicant of the neighbouring town of Themi, who decided to kill the *nag*. He came to the *tal* accompanied by a devotee. Before entering the water, he instructed his devotee to watch the surface. If he saw blood, it would mean that the python had been killed. If, on the contrary, milk floated on the surface it would simply imply that he had died. To enter lake, the mendicant would have had to transform himself into a python. The mendicant was aware that by killing the *nag*, he would have been guilty of murder, and the power to change into any form at will would be taken away from him. So he handed over some rice (some accounts say, it was *vibhuti*) to his devotee and asked him to sprinkle it over his body as soon as he came out of the lake. The mendicant then transformed himself into a *nag* and entered the *tal*. Seeing the magic rice in his hand, the devotee became evilly ambitious. He fervently wished the *nag* would kill the mendicant as that would make him the sole possessor of the rice which could work miracles for him. He was saddended when he saw blood on the water's surface. What if he did not sprinkle rice on the python mendicant, he asked him self? And ran. The mendicant surfaced in the form of the *nag* and went after his devotee, requesting him to sprinkle the rice over his body. But the man was beyond caring. Unfortunately for him, he tripped and fell and the entire rice spilled on the ground. The *nag* bit him and he died instantly. The *nag* then came back to the *tal* . And ever since men, from far and wide, have been coming to worship the Nag-Devta of Themi. How ever, no man from Themi ever dares to come near the *tal*.



Fair of the Thief

IT IS impossible to predict with any degree of certitude, how a man will react to adversity: whether he will be snowed under and take to evil ways, or rise to heights of grandeur. 'My time has come. Go and get some money to meet any contingency that may arise. Also, buy a few clothes for the baby,' said a wife to her husband. He was a lotus-eater and never did anything more than the barest minimum. The idea of going out to look for work was unpleasant. Nevertheless he got up reluctantly and went to the jungle to cut wood. He took his bundle of wood to the bazar and sold it. Deciding that he would not need the axe again, he sold it to make some extra money. With his pocket fairly full, he happily turned homewards. On the way he crossed a *bhattiwali's shop*, where some men were carousing, gambling and making merry. The man thought, I am in luck. I am soon to be blessed with a child, I have earned by the dint of hard work, and I have been able to sell off my useless axe. If I gamble with this money now, I am sure to win. And he sat down at the gambling table. But he had run out of his quota of luck. He lost the entire sum, some on drinks and the rest in gambling. Cursing, he left for his village. Reaching home, he saw his wife in labour pains, and for the first time in his life, he suffered remorse. He went back, set on to begging, borrowing or stealing to bring money somehow for his beloved spouse and for the infant who was yet to be born. What sins, he brooded, had the baby committed that he should be born to such a worthless father? The sun was setting, and soon the evening stars rose over the horizon. The birds were returning merrily to their nests for rest and repose. And he was moving away from home. He became sentimental and unable to contain himself, he burst into sobs. His loud weeping attracted a thief out on his nightly rounds. Learning of his plight, the thief told him to be calm and wait till he came back with his booty. The man waited almost all night. Just when he was beginning to despair, he heard a rustling noise nearby. The thief had come back with a bag stuffed with jewellery. Handing over the booty to him the thief said, 'My friend, go back to your beloved wife. Who else is there to stand by her at this difficult time? Never gamble again and start some business. You have an innocent child to look after'. The man felt ashamed of himself and went back home. His wife had already delivered a son and he hurried to do the necessary shopping. In due course, he started his own business which happily flourished and his wealth multiplied by leaps and bounds. He often remembered his benefactor, the thief, and looked everywhere for him. But he could not be traced. To perpetuate his memory, the man opened a *dharamsala* in the thief's name. He also began an annual fair to commemorate with the day of his first meeting with a man who had kind heart behind his questionable profession. The fair of the thief is still held in many villages all over Western Nepal.

The Serpent of River Nakhu

ALTHOUGH WE are all familiar with adage, 'Look before you leap, and think before you speak', few of us practise it. And when it comes to women, more often than not, they think after they have spoken! This is what happened to the *nagin* (female serpent) of river Nakhu. Many people, walking on the banks of the river, claim to have heard her cries. The *nagin* had opened her mouth without thought and she is still repenting.

Long ago when the Nag Karkoktak was dwelling in Nepal, there lived a pair of *nags* on the banks of river Nakhu. They possessed the supernatural power of transforming themselves into any form they desired. The *nag* developed a taste for gambling, and he would often assume a man's form and join a group of gamblers. He was, however, a persistent loser and remained constantly under debt. No wonder he was disturbed by his creditors at the oddest hours. A woman, generally, is given to nagging, and the *nagin* was no exception. She, of course, had a reason to belabour him.

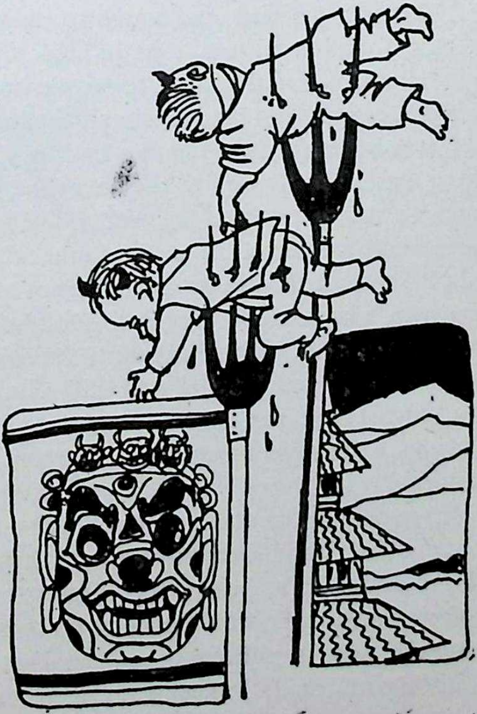
One day, the *nag* told his wife that he had decided to give up gambling and occupy himself with healthier pursuits. He was, therefore, keen to see the annual fair of Banga Deo. (Banga Deo and Machhendranath are the other names of Karunamaya, the god of mercy. See legend of Karunamaya). He would he said, pray to the deity to give him the power to desist from gambling. And he instructed his wife not to tell any one of his whereabouts.

Soon after the *nag* had left, one of his many creditors came enquiring about him. This had always irked his wife. In any case, like most wives, she had little faith in her husband. She feared that under the pretext of visiting the fair, he may have gone to gamble. If he had gone to the deity's fair, he could surely have taken her too? 'Oh that incorrigible rascal!' She mused. 'Why did I not see through his cunning?' A desire to teach him a lesson took hold of her and she told the visitor about the likely wherabouts of her husband. She also gave him a description of his dress so that he could identify him. The creditor went to the fair of Banga Deo and unpleasently surprised the *nag* by confronting him. The *nag* wondered at the man's ability to trace him so easily. On having told that his description had been given by his own wife, the *nag* commented bitterly, 'Oh God, is there no way of getting rid of her?' Her indiscretion disgusted him. He had no money, he told his creditor and offered himself as payment. The creditor agreed and made an offering of the *nag* to the deity. From that day the *nag* became a servant at the temple of Banga Deo. The cries of his foolish wife are still heard by those who stroll by the river Nakhu.

The Demons of Jamacho

THERE IS a strange annual fair at the town of Gola. The entire popreulace take out a procession in which some children ag;carried strung on huge forks. As the procession moves along; loud curses are hurled by all on the dwellers of Kathmandu.

The story goes that in the remote past there lived a demon in the jungles of Mount Jamacho near the township of Gola. In his old age, he could not procure enough meat to fill his belly. His tricks were well-known to the entire human community, and he failed to lure any one to his traps. He became a child lifter. He would sneak into the town under various guises, and carry the children in his huge cloak to his hideout in the jungle. There he would devour them with a great relish. Soon, the sense of personal tragedy spread to each house. The townsmen of Gola decided to get rid of this menace. They went to the temple priest and told him to either do something, or leave the temple for a better claimant. Thus threatened, the priest prayed to the goddess for many days. At last she listened to his prayers and bestowed the power of invisibility on the inhabitants of Gola. Consequently, many young men got hold of whatever weapons they could and waited outside the town for the arrival of the demon. As dusk fell and the birds became silent in their nests, the demon came out on his nocturnal round. The men fell upon him and gave him a thorough beating. The demon realized that his end was approaching. So he changed his form and became a human being and fled towards Kathmandu. The men gave him a hot chase, but the demon ran faster and managed to give a slip to his tormentors, who chased him right up to Kathmandu. There they searched every nook and corner but the demon simply seemed to have vanished. They asked every citizen, but the people of Kathmandu did not reply. The people of Gola went back frustrated and full of resentment against the people of Kathmandu. On arrival in Gola, they turned fury against the family of the demon. They went to the jungle and mercilessly killed his children. They carried their bodies held aloft on forks, in a procession to avenge the loss of the their own children. As the procession slowly moved they hurled curses on the people of Kathmandu for their heartless indifference.



Chara ko Bhat

The Bird's Breakfast

ONE FINE morning a bird rose early to search for her food. She found a nice pea in a field. She at once brought it with her and decided to have a hearty breakfast. She thought that as God had been particularly kind to her that day, it was better for her to have a bath, say her prayers and then have a feast. She flew off to the holy river for a bath. Her problem was where to keep the pea? If she left it on the ground either the ants would get it, or the other birds would take it. At last she kept the pea on the railing of a bridge and asked the carpenter, who was repairing it, to look after it. She then went to have a bath. After her return she asked the carpenter for the pea, but he just laughed and said, 'I am not your servant. Government pays me, and I was ordered to repair a Government bridge. Your pea must have fallen off.' With this he got busy again.

The bird was heart-broken at the reply. She was apprehensive that as the other birds were already out, they must have finished off all the grain. In any case, the farmers now would be guarding their stocks. She would have to go hungry. Whilst she was thinking this way, a policeman passed that way. She accosted him for help and said, 'Policeman! please help a poor bird. I have lost my pea. A carpenter was repairing the bridge, and I told him to look after it, but he has either stolen it, or it has fallen off; and I cannot recover it. I am very hungry and I just do not know where my pea has disappeared.'

The Policeman replied 'Oh, you arrogant bird, how dare you stop me like this? I have to maintain law and order for which I get paid and have some privileges. I am on my way to the house of an accused, who has promised me a sumptuous feast. What is it to me if you go hungry? I will have a meal.' And he went his way.

The bird got scared at this admonishment and cursed her luck. After all, in the wicked world where was the need for a bath? She should have eaten her breakfast and then gone to the river. It was her own fault. Now she would have to go hungry. She was thus going her way, cursing her luck, when a police inspector happened that way. She stopped him and told him the whole story, 'Inspector, inspector. Won't you help a poor lady. The carpenter lost my pea and your policeman refused to help. Will you please intervene and do something?'

The inspector roared back and said, 'How dare you stop me? Can't you see I am going out? The minister is coming for a visit and I have to make all the arrangements. My promotion, which depends on his report, will be at stake. What is it to me if you have lost your pea? You can go to hell for all I care.' And was on his way.

The bird thought that she was in a land where people were self-centred and inconsiderate of other's problems. She would have to go hungry. She was musing thus when the minister came that way, riding on his horse. She stopped him and said, 'Minister! Minister! won't you help a poor lady? I have lost my pea and all the government servants who have passed so far have refused to help me. The carpenter lost it, the policeman was more keen on his feast, the police inspector was more worried about his promotion. No one has bothered about me so far.'

The minister said, 'Much as I would like to help you my lady, I am sorry I have no time. The Raja will be coming this way and I have to see that all arrangements are made. I am really very sorry.' And he trolled away.

The bird was happy that, at last, someone had spoken to her in a civilized manner. The minister was probably busy. Otherwise, he would have helped her. Since he had a pressing business, what was the harm if he went his way? She was thinking like this, when the Raja came that side riding his elephant. She stopped him and said, 'Raja! Raja! you are the ruler. Won't you help a poor bird?'

She then told him the whole story. The carpenter had lost the pea, the policeman only shouted at her, the inspector roared and only the minister had some time to listen to her; but he had other work to which he had to give priority. She said, "You are the king, won't you solve the problem of a lady?'

The king did not seem to appreciate the arrogence of a tiny bird who had stopped him while he was on a visit to his people. He did not even care to reply. His bodyguard shouted at her; 'Get aside.' And the Raja ambled off on his elephant.

The bird was now sure that nothing could or would be done about the matter. She had approached the highest authority in the land and had been unsuccessful. Sitting on the railing of the bridge, she was contemplating on her bad luck. 'Why did I go for a bath at all in this heartless land ? Surely doomsday is near at hand for this land of utter selfishness.' Thus sitting in a pensive mood, she suddenly saw an ant going around on her daily chores. She at once went to her and told her the whole story. At last she said, 'Ant! Ant! go and tell the elephant that he should make the Raja agree to my request, or I will eat you up'.

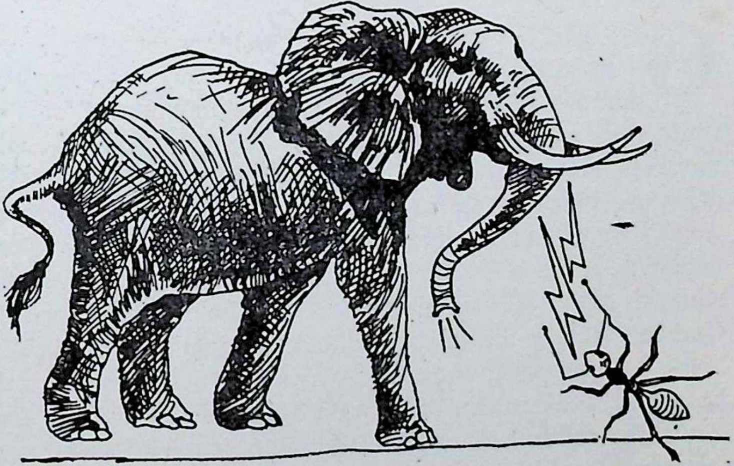
The ant said, 'No, No, my lady, do not do that. I will go just now to the elephant and get the needful done,' and she ran to the elephant and spoke in his ear, 'You heard the bird request the king, and you also saw the rude way in which she was brushed aside by the arrogant bodyguard. I want you to force the king to help her otherwise I will give a deadly sting on your nose.'

Thus threatened, the elephant addressed the Raja and said, 'I very much request you to listen to the bird, otherwise I will be bitten by the ant. And the pain may make me drop you and the fall may break your bones; you may even die.'

The king was surprised by the turn of events. He, however, had no choice. He was terrified for his life. He at once summoned the minister and ordered him to look into the request of the bird. The minister left everything and ran to the inspector. He told him, 'So, you are the fellow who maintains law and order. Do you know the poor bird was ill-treated by the carpenter and your policeman did not solve her problem? Do something about it and make it snappy, or you may be deprived of your rank as well as your uniform.'

The inspector went to the policeman and thundered at him. He, in turn, got hold of the carpenter and threatened him of dire consequences. The carpenter at once ran back and found the pea.

The bird had a hearty breakfast.



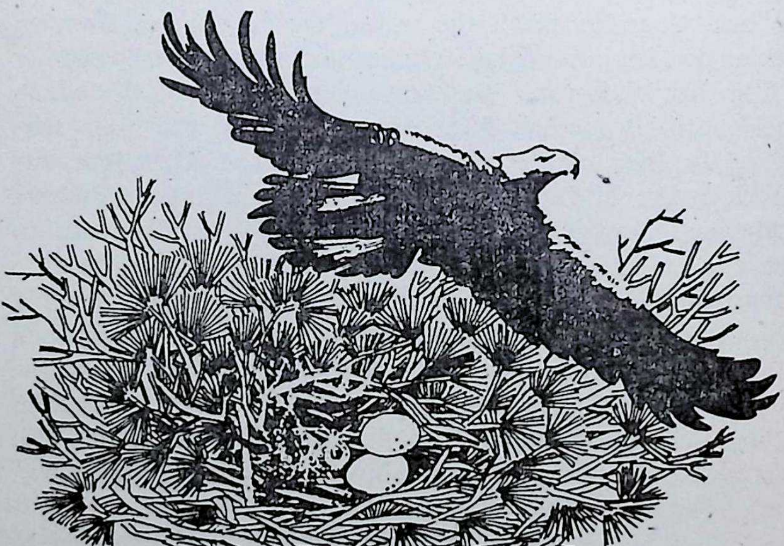
Bhagya ko Devi

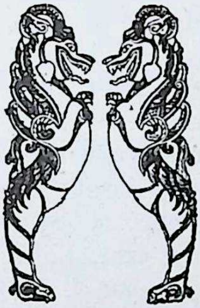
The Goddess of Luck

ONCE UPON a time there lived an old woman in a certain village. She had an only son. They were very poor and lived from hand to mouth by doing menial jobs. At times, they were even compelled to beg. This state became more and more irksome and unacceptable to the child as he grew up. One day he asked his mother, 'Oh mother, why are we so poor ?' And the mother replied, 'this is the will of the Almighty. It is a matter of fate.' The child was not satisfied with this reply. He told his mother that he would search for God and ask him for an explanation. Saying this, he left his home and set out to the east. After a long and tiresome walk, he reached the outskirts of a jungle. He sat down under a huge tree to rest. As luck would have it, Shiva and Parvati came that way. Lord Mahadeva asked the child what he was doing in that fearsome jungle. The boy told him the whole story and explained his mission. He said that he was in search of God so that he could become rich. Mahadeva and Parvati were pleased with the child's firm determination. Parvati took pity on him and requested Mahadeva to give something to him. Mahadeva replied that the child could get only what fate had decreed for him. Should anything be given to him, the lord said, 'it will not remain with him'. But Parvati insisted that something be given to the boy. At this, Mahadeva gave him a gold-necklace. The boy was very pleased and set out for his home. On the way he developed a severe pain in his stomach. He kept the gold-necklace on the ground and went behind a bush to ease himself. Just then an eagle swooped down and flew away with the necklace. The child came home weeping, and narrated the whole story to his mother. His mother, however, did not believe him. Next day the child went again to the same place where he had met the kind couple. And Mahadeva repeated what he had told Parvati earlier: that having lost the necklace, the boy had come again to get one more, but that he still would not be able to retain it till his luck so desired. Parvati, however, pleaded his case again and asked Mahadeva to do something to remove his poverty. Mahadeva approached Brahma and requested him to help the child. Brahma gave a diamond ring to him. The boy started for his home beaming with joy. On the way, he felt thirsty. He searched for water and, at last, came to a lake. As he bent down to reach the water, the ring slipped from his pocket and fell into the lake. It was immediately swallowed by a fish. The child came back crying and narrated the whole incident to his mother. Next day he reached the same spot where he had met the celestial couple. Lord Mahadeva was struck by the child's determination. He spoke to Lord Brahma and then both went to Vishnu. Vishnu gave some diamonds to the child. Having been wisened by his earlier experiences, he went straight home. His mother had gone out begging. He hid the diamonds in a corner of his house and went out in serach of his mother. In his absence, thieves came and took away the entire wealth. On reaching back with his mother, the child found that the diamonds had disappeared. His mother also lost her temper and reprimanded him for his aimless wanderings. He was not a liar and cried bitterly.

The child had neither lost heart nor hope, and returned to the same spot the next day. Mahadeva thought to himself that in spite of repeated set backs, the child had not lost his determination. He went to the goddess of luck and asked her to give something to the child. The goddess gave him one copper coin and the child happily came back home and showed it to his mother. Luck had, at last, smiled on them. After a time, a fisherman came to sell his fish at their house. The boy wanted to eat fish and purchased one with his coin. When he cut the fish, he found the same ring that had slipped from his pocket as he bent to drink water from the lake. He handed over the diamond ring to his mother. He then climbed the tree to fell some wood. There was an eagle's nest on the tree. The boy found his gold necklace in the nest. This was not all. As luck would have it, the thief who had stolen his wealth met with an accident. He saw a dream in which the gods ordered him to return the diamonds he had stolen from the child. The thief came the same day and returned the diamonds.

And the widow and her son became very rich!





Sun ko Machha

The Golden Fish

'IF I also let you go, what shall we eat? And even if I decide to go hungry, what about that terrible woman of mine!' said the old man, and shuddered to think that his wife may have heard what he said. 'Let me go and call me in your hour of need. I will see to it that all valid desires of yours are fulfilled!' said the golden fish.

The man was in two minds. He was beginning to be convinced by what the fish said. He had never seen a fish like this before. At the same time, he was afraid of his wife, who was a terrible nag. Her sole occupation in life appeared to be to nag her husband and make him feel small. If he ever tried to retaliate, she would make such a scene that they would become the laughing-stock of the whole community. The man finally gave up and turned deaf ear to her. But how deaf can a hearing ear turn?

This is the true story of a man and his wife who lived in a village on the banks of a lake. The lake had many types of fish. Many people eked out a living by netting the fish and selling them in far-off towns and villages. The couple whose story we are now narrating grew old in this trade. There was a time when they were young. The man was full of energy and ideas. The lady, a young girl at that time, had fixed ideas about how man should be, and straight away set to mend the ways of her husband and mould him after her heart's desire. Now we all know that it is a hopeless job. How can a man change his habits and ways? Every man grows up to be an individual and no two men are alike. That is God's will! Still how many ladies foolishly try to change their husbands and thereby only contribute to the gross unhappiness of their married lives. But it is equally strange, how men ultimately come to accept this scheme of things and quietly submit to their wives, wagging their tails. The old man and his wife were no different. The old man had lived a life of utter misery and pocketed many an insult so generously delivered by the vile-tongue of his wife. He was afraid but did not change his habits. In this hopeless game, they grew old. The man had lofty plans when he was young, but his spirits were so badly dampened by the constant bickerings of his wife so that he just stopped trying. He never went beyond the lake. The morning on which this story took a queer turn was no different. His wife had woken him up with intermittent abuses and cursed herself for being tied to an inconsiderate wreck like him. He had slowly walked to the river carrying his net and basket on his shoulders. He had cast his net with high hopes. But here the story took an unusual turn. Previously many a fish used to get caught in the net and he would return in no time. That morning, however, he tried many times till the sun was overhead beating down mercilessly on him. But not a single fish found its way to his net. He was in a predicament.

He could even go hungry for a day but what about the vile tongue of his wife? Her curses and abuses would be a bit more unbearable than usual. And he went on casting the net till his arms ached with the exertion. He prayed to the *Jal Devi* and cast his net for the last time. Praying to the *Jal Devi* at every pull, he slowly hauled the net out. To his surprise and utter dismay, there was just one tiny golden fish in the net, the like of which he had not seen before. As he started moving towards his home, the fish spoke to him and pleaded that he should let her go. When he replied in the negative, the fish pleaded and promised that she was no ordinary fish and would fulfil all his desires. He remembered that before casting the net for the last time, he had prayed to the *Jal Devi.* Possibly, he mused, the *Devi* was pleased with him and the fish could well be a boon from the *Devi*. Thinking this, he told the fish the story of his life and the way it had been wasted by a nagging, inconsiderate woman. It was, therefore, necessary for him to take something home. The fish however, pleaded that she was too small for both of them, or even for the wife, and that he should give her miraculous powers a fair try. She would be at his beck and call. She had small children at home, who would perish without her. The old man was moved and let her go. The fish merrily disappeared and the old man retraced his steps with a heavy heart. Back home he was showered with the choicest abuses and the blame that he must have eaten the catch alone. She went into the usual hysterical cycle of abusing him first and then cursing her luck for having married such a worthless fellow. At last, when she was absolutely exhausted, the old man hesitantly told her the story of the golden fish. The woman blared out with renewed energy, 'Go this very moment, you worthless wreck, and ask the fish for some thing to eat'.

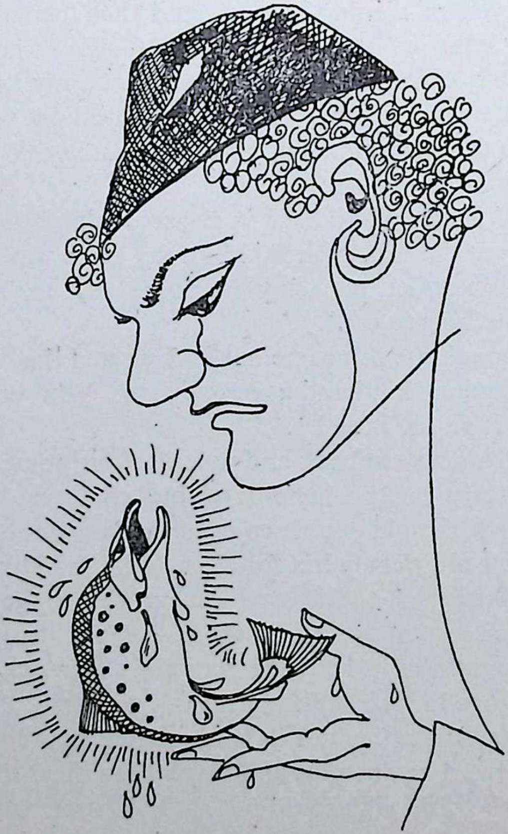
The old man walked back in the scorching heat to the river and called out the fish. 'Oh fish! fish! my guess was correct. My woman will not let me stay in peace till her belly is full. Give us something to eat.'

Sure enough the fish came out and greeted the old man, 'Go home this time my kind and generous man. You will see that your house is full of eatables.'

The old man went back and was pleasantly surprised at the sight of his lady having her fill of the choicest dishes! Time went on and the old couple enjoyed the luxuries of life. They changed their old rickety hut for a palatial building made of marble. All seemed to be well except the tongue of the old woman which moved as relentlessly as before. Prosperity even brought haughtiness in her behaviour and she frequently boasted that the change in their luck was all due to her.

One day she got the idea in her head that how could a wreck like her husband be one plus and better than her? If he could command the fish, why could not she? As soon as the thought crossed her mind, she got after the old man and insisted on seeing the fish. She thought that when the fish came in her hands, she would get even better things from her than her unintelligent husband. The old man at first tried to parry the demand, but finally gave in. He thought that there was no harm at all in getting the fish for his wife. Accordingly he went, and told the fish his mission. The fish replied that her powers were meant only for him. She could not achieve anything for anyone else. For fear of the wife, the old man insisted on her accompanying him, and explaining this to his wife. The fish got into the basket and died on the way.

When the old man reached home, the palace had disappeared and the old, wretched woman was lying huddled in a corner of the same old rickety hut. For once, the old man shouted at her. She shed bitter tears but the golden fish was gone for ever.



Na Risaune Swasnhi

The Wife Who Will Not Get Annoyed

'NO, SHE will never say a word to me. She has implicit faith in me,' boasted the man.

The owner of the hotel was, however, not convinced and was prepared to take a bet. He had yet to come across a lady who was not fond of nagging her husband and belittling him—specially, when there was so much of provocation! No, the man was off his mind and boasting.

'I will take the bet,' he said.

After some further discussion, the matter was settled.

Once there lived a couple in a certain village. They were very poor and literally lived from hand to mouth. However, adversity brought that extra bond of love and understanding between them. If one fell sick, the other made no end of fussing. If the man was out, the lady would spend most of her time waiting at the door. The man helped her with household chores. What if the money was not there? They were happy, and regarded as paradigms of a peaceful life by the people.

Once a brief illness of the man depleted and in fact, finished their scanty reserves of money completely. They had nothing to eat. With a heavy heart, they decided to sell their cow. Before the setting of the morning star, the wife woke up her husband and sent him with the cow. Before they left she spoke endearing words to the cow and said that if the God had not created so much of want for them, they would not have parted company with their beloved cow. Tears welled up in her eyes. The cow licked her face and the man left quickly, hiding his own tears.

He went from place to place as fast as his feet could take him to sell the cow, but to no avail. He was reminded of the parting scene between the cow and his wife, and thought that they had despaired a bit too early. He was considering returning home when he noticed a man approaching him on a horse. As soon as the horseman came near, he asked him if he would kindly exchange the horse with his cow. He praised the cow and told him that if he had not been tired, and in a hurry to reach home where his dear wife was waiting for him, he would not have entered into an exchange which was obviously to his disadvantage. He then went on to explain that his wife was of a worrying nature and if he did not reach home in time, she would start crying, and even faint with worry. The rider took pity on him and exchanged his horse for the cow. The man at once rode the horse and came towards his village at the gallop. Near a bridge on a stream, his way was blocked by a herd of goats who panicked and ran helter-skelter. An idea crossed his mind that a goat probably would be better than a horse. The goats bred quickly, and their milk was a good source of energy. He approached the shepherd and put forward his proposal. The shepherd was sick of walking with his herd and was rather keen on getting a ride so that he could do his tedious and monotonous job better. Moreover, one goat was of no consequence to him. The bargain was struck without any delay. The man tied a rope around the neck of his goat and set out for home. He was hungry and thirsty. He thought of his wife who might not have eaten anything throughout the day, and might be waiting for him sitting outside the house. He thought it to be a better idea to exchange the goat with a hen, which would, at least, lay eggs which he and his wife could eat. Hens also hatched a large number of chicks at a time and they could virtually live on eggs and meat. Why had he not thought of it earlier? He went to the nearby village and exchanged the goat for a hen. Enroute he passed a wayside hotel. The strong aroma of cooked food made him forget all his plans and he exchanged the hen for food. The owner of the hotel came to him and asked him the reason for paying in kind rather than cash. Our hero told him the entire story and the number of exchanges he had already made. The proprietor of the hotel burst into peals of laughter and told him that he was in for real trouble. His wife would surely chide him for making such an unwise bargain. His series of exchanges had, in fact, meant that he bought just one meal with a cow. Our hero, however, smiled at this and said that his wife would never nag him. The hotel owner was ready to take a bet, He said that he would accompany him and, if his wife said nothing, he would pay the combined price of a cow, a horse, a goat and a hen. But if she did admonish him for his unwise behaviour, he would have to serve in his hotel as a bonded labourer for life. The man readily agreed. They both went to his house. Sure enough, his wife was waiting outside and eagerly asked him how he was. He told her that he was all right, but that he had exchanged the cow for a horse. His wife said, "Well done, I always wanted you not to exert yourself too much. Now you will be in a position to move around in a befitting manner."

The man said, 'But that is not all, I exchanged my horse for a goat.'

His wife replied, 'Excellent! I have always wanted to keep a goat. Its droppings make fine manure and we can always sell them. Not only will it yield milk, but we will also be in a position to, occasionally, take meat because goats are known to breed pretty quickly.'

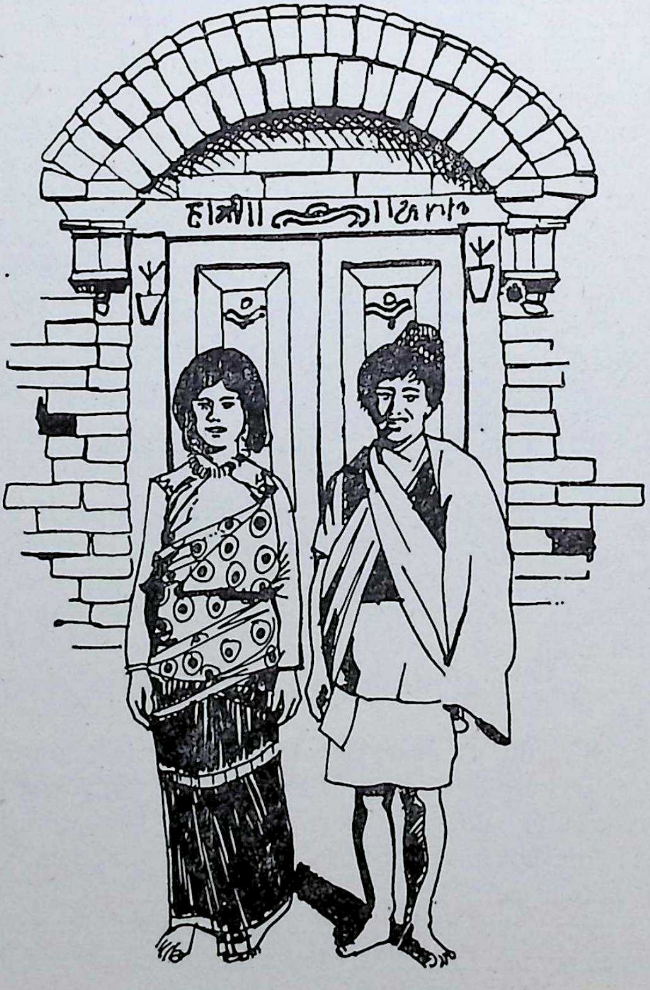
The man added, 'But that is not all. I exchanged my horse for a hen.'

His wife said, 'O dear, how did you come to know that I was keen on keeping poultry? I love the looks of young chicks. Poultry-keeping does not cost anything. The profusion of insects in our house will be lessened, and we will be in a position to take eggs.'

The man sighed and said, 'Now be prepared for a shock. I exchanged my hen for a meal. I was far too hungry and did not know what to do.'

His wife said, 'You could not have made a better bargain. What use are these possessions if you, the man of the house, have to go hungry? If you are all right you can earn and look after me. If something goes wrong with you... Oh God! I cannot think of that.'

The hotel-owner had lost the bet and kept his promise of making the payments. The man and his wife got the necessary capital to start their own business and lived happily ever after.



Chucha Burhiya

The Old Miser Woman

'THAT SHOULD be a good method of killing two birds with one stone. The old woman may improve and the predicament we are in may be solved,' said *kanchhi bahu.* 'Yes, I agree with my pretty and youngest sister,' said *jethi bahu.* All others agreed that they should put the plan into operation. Hence, they set about selecting their own masks.

This is the story of five daughters-in-law, and not very different from the other mother-in-law and daughter-in-law stories the world over. They never seem to pull on well anywhere.

A couple had five sons. They married them to five pretty girls. At the time of marriage, the woman would vociferously say that a daughter-in-law was like a daughter to her. They had no daughters of their own and this would fulfil an old desire. But soon, things turned out to be quite, quite different. The mother was jealous of her daughters-in-law. She felt that they were taking all the time and attention of her sons. She became openly hostile of her daughters-in-law. While she fed her sons with the choicest dishes, she gave only maize-bread to the daughters-in-law. They worked all day in the fields to grow a fine quality rice, but that was not ever given them. Time went on and with it their resentment grew. One day the *kanchhi bahu* said, 'what is this life we are leading? The old hag is filling the stores with rice, but does not give us even a single grain. We work in the fields and help it grow, but never get to eat it. I think, it is rightfully ours. Why should we not take it?'

'I agree with you', said *sayenli.* 'But what can we do'? 'We can remove a little rice at a time, and bring it with us in the morning when we come to the field, or go to the jungle to collect wood. We can keep the same quantity of dried leaves in the ration bin,' said *kanchhi.*

Full of pent-up resentment, they all agreed. The first day, they took some rice and ate it with relish in the jungle. They were worried lest the old woman discovered their deceit. When this did not happen, they picked up courage and started taking more and more rice. They would even exchange some with other eatables like eggs and meat. This went on for quite some time till the rice bin was almost empty. It contained only dry leaves, with a thin layer of rice over them. Market-day was approaching, and this put the fear of God in their minds. The old hag would obviously blame them. They kept scratching their heads till the smart *kanchhi* came up with a plan. 'Let us mask our faces one night and shout like demons and ghosts. We can also say that although the old hag has hidden rice nothing can be concealed from us. We are going to eat all of it. It is rather good that she under-feeds her daughters-in-law and saves the rice for us.'

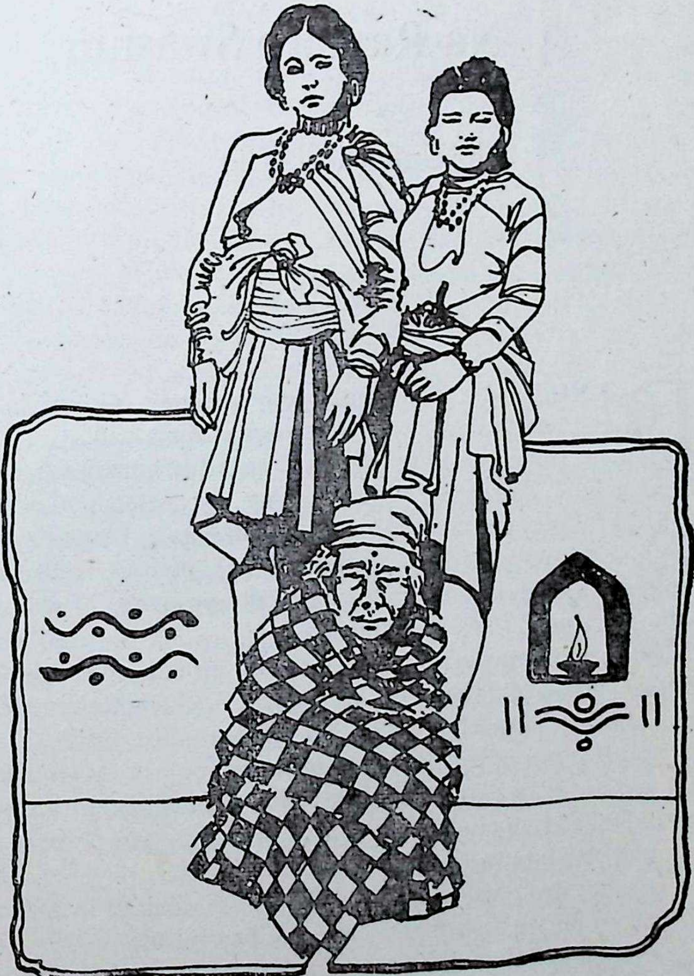
They all agreed that it would be a good method of killing two birds with one stone. Selecting their masks one night. they put their plan into operation. In the morning, they eagerly awaited the outcome. The mother-in-law got up with a slight fever and went straight to the store. Her worst fears were true. She called her daughters-in-law, 'Come my dear darlings, how are you all? You never sit with me,' she said to the girls.

They marvelled at this sudden change of heart. 'Did you hear any voices at night?' she enquired of *kanchhi.*

'No, mother-in-law. After doing hard and tedious work in paddy-fields, I was so tired that I slept like a log.'

'What is the use of working in the paddy-fields and storing rice for the demons?' questioned the old woman. 'What? What?' they all cried in chorus. 'You do not know, my children, I have been duly punished for my miserliness.'

From that day, *kanchhi* became the favourite of all the older girls.



Na Ramaro Swasnhi

The Unfaithful Wife

'DO NOT insist. It will make you unhappy. Go to sleep, and let me sleep,' said the sparrow to his wife.

'No, you must tell me. Who is this woman who has arrived so late, and why is she waiting so restlessly for the morning? While you fly around to far-off places, I sit on eggs. God alone knows where you go. For all I know you must be having other wives in other places. You disappear for inordinately long periods,' she complained.

The sparrow was afraid that his wife would now relapse into that mood of doubt and despondency which is characteristic of the female species. So he said, 'If you must insist, hear the story. It is not of the fickleness of man, but of a woman. But I do not even blame her. Her environment affected her so. In a land where polyandry is practised, how can you expect a woman to be happy with one husband?'

The she sparrow interrupted him with obvious irritation, 'Will you go on with your story and not be cynical.'

'Yes,' he continued. 'The woman who has taken shelter under our tree is the sister of the unlucky man who now faces a death sentence, because of the treachery of his wife. You know polyandry is prevalent in this valley. In that yonder village over the hill, there lived a man. Learned and well travelled that he was, he opposed this system. How could he tolerate his wife having more than one husband? But that was the custom in their society, and he was helpless. No woman came forward to marry him. So he prayed to the goddess that he be given the power to carve a woman out of his own body The goddess came to him in his dream and told him to cut his body in two halves: from one half, he would be resurrected while the other would take the form of a beautiful woman, whom he could marry. She, however, cautioned him to collect all the blood and offer it to the temple of the *Devi*.

The man did as he was told and to his great surprise, a beautiful woman took shape from the second half of his body. He was so captivated by her feminine charms and so overpowered by passion, that he forgot to collect the blood and offer it to the *Devi*. While he made merry, the spilt blood turned into a snake and disappeared into a hole in the ground. This was no ordinary snake. He could transform himself into any form. He had also seen the beautiful woman and had been enamoured of her. One day he transformed himself into a handsome man and went to her house with presents of beautiful clothes and jewels. She had seen her friends live with more than one husband and secretly envied them. She fell an easy prey to the advances of the visitor and the snake became a regular visitor to her place. He would transform himself into a handsome man and go to her whenever her husband was away. She also became increasingly fond of her lover and nagged her husband persistently. She frequently managed to send him out on useless errands so that she could enjoy the company of her paramour more often. Gradually the very presence of the husband began to irritate her. She plotted with her lover to put an end to his life. The snake assured that it would not be a problem at all. He could easily sting him to death. She begged him to do that at the first available opportunity. The cuckolded husband was oblivious of the evil designs on his life by his beloved wife.

One day the snake came to the house and concealed himself in a corner. He was waiting for an opportunity to strike. The man soon fell asleep, and the snake slithered towards him. The wife had feigned sleep but was wide awake. But fate decreed otherwise. As the snake was about to strike, the man was bitten by a bed bug. He got up with a start, and saw the snake. He drew out his *khukri* and cut the snake to pieces. The woman was inconsolable. She chided her husband severely, "Don't you know that snakes are to be worshipped? Now I will have to expiate for your sin by visiting Kashi to perform the last rites of the snake."

Credulous as the man was, he readily agreed. He was so much in love with his wife that he had failed to notice her growing coldness.

The woman put the head of the snake in a box and went to Kashi. There she went to many *pandits* and *pujaris* and enquired about the possibility of reviving her paramour. At last, a man who was an adept *tantric* told her that the only possible way was by sacrificing her husband. She readily agreed to do that. She was aware of the simplicity of the man and thought that she would easily achieve her objective. She had a locket made and put the head of the snake in it. She hung it around her neck and came back. On the way she kept thinking of a plan to kill her husband.

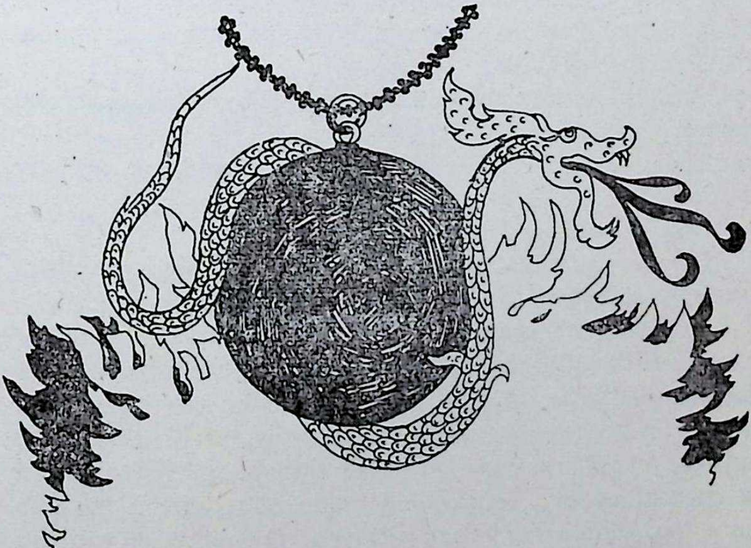
Days rolled on while she waited for the right opportunity. At last, she thought of a plan. She said to her husband, 'You are always so eager to go to sleep. Let us put some riddles to each other, and the one who fails to give the correct answer will have to grant the victor any wish. The husband agreed. and she asked the question, "Which is the thing dearest to me, and the one that I never wish to part with?"

The foolish husband thought that she meant him. In spite of many guesses, he failed. The lady had obviously meant the locket containing the head of the snake. At last the man gave up, and she told him that she wanted him to die to fulfil the terms of the agreement. He was taken aback, but he had no choice. However, he requested her to let him live for a few more days, so that he could see his only sister. He sent an urgent message to her; and the woman, who is now taking shelter under the tree is the sister of the unlucky man facing death.'

'You women,' said the sparrow to his wife, 'are always quick to blame men and eye them with suspicion. See what your sex is capable of?'

On receiving her brother's message, his sister had set out at once. En route was a jungle she could not cross because of the darkness. So she chose a big banyan tree and took shelter under it for the night. She, however, waited impatiently for the morning. She had the gift of understanding the language of the birds and beasts, and heard the dialogue of the sparrows. Hearing of the hopeless situation her brother was in, she got up and set out for his house. The dialogue of the sparrows had revealed the truth to her. She told him the whole story and exposed the wickedness of the faithless wife. The man snatched the mysterious locket from her neck, opened it and found the head of the snake. He put it on fire, and cut off the nose and ears of his unfaithful wife.

He married another woman who had other husbands, as was the custom of the society and they all lived happily ever after.



Mo le Teenota Khanchhun

I Will Eat Three

AND SO they continue to roam about as wandering ghosts. Many times on dark cloudy nights their acrimonious debate can still be heard.

'I will have three and you have two,' the witch shouts at the top of her voice.

Then the ghost roars, 'No I deserve three and you can have two.'

And this endless debate goes on.

The story goes that once upon a time, long long ago, there lived an old couple in a village. They were ever quarrelling. The neighbourhood were tired of their altercations. One day, the old man went to the market and bought five mangoes for the money that he earned that day. He had hardly entered the door of his house, when he started shouting, 'I will have three and you can have two. I worked throughout the day and earned some money. Since you are married to me, I have to share the hard earned food with you, O God! when will you take this old wreck back?'

But the old woman would have none of this. She retorted, 'I keep working throughout the day like a machine. What do I get? You cannot even provide me with one square meal. Cursed be the day I married you. I will have three and you have two. In any case, how do I know how many you have already eaten outside. I have no faith in you.'

The fight went on late into the night, and almost till the time the morning star was due to rise. At last they were exhausted and the old man said, 'All right, let us arrive at some decision. One who speaks first will get two, and the one who does not talk will get three mangoes.'

The old man thought that he had played an intelligent trick on his wife. He felt that she would not be able to keep her mouth shut. He had misjudged her. He was not aware of the stubbornness of the fair sex! The couple maintained total silence till the sun was almost over their heads. The neighbours were surprised for they were not used to this quiet and peace in that house. At last they decided to investigate. Two or three daring couples of the neighbourhood picked up enough courage and entered the house. They were surprised to see the old couple hiding in different corners with their heads covered. They called out to them; but the couple did not stir. Thinking they were dead, the neighbours decided to take them to the cremation ground to perform their last rites. The old couple kept mum, for none was ready to lose the extra mango. At last the procession reached the cremation ground. Euroute some people said that they were at last rid of the constant quarrels of the old couple. A few bright wits said that whilst the couple lived, no thieves could ever enter their street!

At the cremation ground they realised that they could not cremate both together. After some discussion, they decided to cremate the man first. The pyre was made ready and the man put on it. Fire was lighted, and the man now felt enough was enough and shouted out the unfairness of it all. Had they forgotten that ladies always come first. Hearing this, the old woman said gleefully, 'now I will have three and you have two.'

The old man said, 'If you were put on the fire first, you would have also yelled out. I will have three and you have two.'

Hearing this conversation, the people thought that the couple had become ghosts and wanted to eat five of them. Only they were undecided who would eat three. Thinking this, the men took to their heels. The old couple ran after them shouting at the top of their voices, 'I will have three', 'I will have three.' The people panicked and fled as fast as they could.

The couple at last reached their home but the mangoes had gone bad. They were too tired and exhausted. The man refused to work any more and they both starved to death. But now no one volunteered to perform their last rites, and they became ghosts, shouting to this day, 'I will have three, and you have two.'

A Tale of Love

ONCE UPON a time there lived a couple in a certain village. They had been married for more than twenty-five years, but God had not blessed them with a child This state of barrenness was unbearable to the woman. She performed severe penances and followed the advice of all and sundry—any one at all who showed her the slightest ray of hope. Her desire, however, remained unfulfilled. The lady spent many sleepless nights. There were frequent altercations between husband and wife, and their married life became unhappy.

One day some visiting mendicants came to that village and established their camp there. Many people went to them with their worries and requests. The mendicants seemed to have a host of remedies for all ailments, real and imagined, physical and mental. The woman thought it a good opportunity to go and ask them to alleviate her suffering. The Mahatma listened to her with great interest, nodding his head from time to time. Finally, he took pity on her and gave her a conch shell. He told her to put the shell in an earthen vessel with some aromatic herbs, and cover it with fresh earth. She should then sprinkle some water on it every day. She must follow this procedure for one week, after which she should remove the earth and, God willing, her desire would be fulfilled.

The couple was very happy with this providential meeting with the holy men, and came home with great expectations. The woman did exactly as the Mahatma had advised her to. She could hardly wait for the seventh day to pass and literally, kept counting every moment. As soon as the sun went down the horizon, she unearthed the conch shell. To her great and pleasant surprise, a beautiful male child was in the vessel. He gave her a sweet smile. He had perfect features and a petal-fresh complexion. The couple was overjoyed. They brought up the child with immense love and affection. They took great pains to see that he was given choicest foods, and provided with most expensive clothing and toys. He grew up to be a handsome boy.

One day, luckily, the princess of that land happened to come there. She saw the boy and fell in love with him. She told her mother about her wish. In due course, the boy was married to the princess. The marriage ceremony was performed with great pomp and show. Many kings and princes came to attend the marriage, and admired the good looks of the couple, and envied the good fortune of the king to have found such a handsome match for his daughter.

One day, the king was busy in the affairs of the state. His son-in-law was having a walk around the palace. Suddenly, a strong gale carried him off and he reached an unknown place. It was a beautiful and enchanting land. Many flowers were in bloom and a great many butterflies were displaying and fanning their rainbow colours in the sun. They all flew towards the young prince and carried him on their wings to the king. The Raja was pleased to see him, fussing over him a great deal. The prince missed his wife and his parents who were at a loss to know the cause of his disappearance. At his new place, he had no dearth of luxuries but he was unhappy. One day he went out for a walk where he met an old she-mouse. The old lady told him that she had a very beautiful house which was close at hand. The prince was looking tired after a walk and deserved some refreshments. She invited him for a drink. The prince agreed. The old lady asked him if he was married and, in fact offered her own beautiful daughter to him. The prince told her the truth. The new proposal made him miss his wife all the more. He then came out of the hole. The she-mouse followed him some distance with earnest requests to stay back and take her daughter for a second wife, but he ran away. At last, he reached a thick jungle, but he kept moving. He lost his way. The sun was about to set. He met a cuckoo who asked him where his house was and invited him to go with her to her dwelling. By now, the prince was fully resigned to his fate and readily agreed. The cuckoo made him ride on her back and flew with him to her exotic land. Her house was located in a beautiful garden with myriad flowers and luscious fruits. Many birds were chirping melodiously. The cuckoo lived in a beautiful palace with a lovely garden. She moved from tree to tree singing her best songs to amuse her guest. The young man noticed that there was a strange flower plant with a single flower of, hiterto unseen, but matchless beauty. On investigation he came to know that a beautiful princess was residing in the flower. The cuckoo requested him to marry this 'princess of the flowers'. But he did not agree to the match saying that he was already married. The cuckoo and the princess kept on pressing him to agree to the proposal. He flatly refused. At this the princess changed her form and appeared before him. She was his own beloved wife! She told him that she had created the entire world of magic by her mysterious power to test the fidelity of her husband. She was the happiest girl in the world for what more could a girl desire than a faithful and loving partner.

The boy brought his old parents to the palace and they lived happily ever after.

Rajkumari Sunkeshi

The Golden Haired Princess

WHEN THE loss of one hair of Sunkeshi was reported to the Raja and Rani, there was a consternation in the palace. A thorough search was launched in vain. The loss of a hair of a virgin has always been considered a bad omen. To cap it all, the hair under question was golden and belonged to the princess, the only daughter of the Raja. Hence something had to be done about it.

This is the true story of a golden haired princess called Sunkeshi. She had seven brothers and was the only sister. Her parents, the Raja and Rani, loved her dearly. No sooner did she say anything, or make any wish, it was granted. God had given her abundant endowments by way of feminine charms; a petal fresh complexion, sparkling almond eyes, thin, seductive lips, flowing golden tresses which almost touched her knees, and an impressive figure. She was, beyond doubt, the most beautiful girl in the whole kingdom.

One day, she went for a bath to the river along with her friends. The young girls had a great time, splashing water and giggling away to glory. They played many games. They dived, jumped, and chased each other. And in these antics, one hair of the princess fell off and was washed away. When the princess came home, her grandmother counted her hair as usual and found one missing. She counted again and again with the same result. The news of the loss spread like wild fire. The loss could be the harbinger of bad luck. It could even endanger the life of the princess—she could be prone to possession by ghosts, or become an easy victim of evil eye, or could possibly be charmed away by any one who came to possess her hair. The Raja and Rani loved her too dearly to dwell on any of these possibilities.

Now, we all know that Rajas of old were, on occasion, rash in their decisions. So without a thought to the consequences, the Raja announced that Sunkeshi would be married to any one who would find the golden hair. The mouths of many youngmen, princes and commoners, alike, watered at the idea. For a while it appeared that all tracks were leading to the river where many a search party spent a lot of time. The princes and Rajas came from far and wide and from the adjoining states, to find the golden hair and claim the hand of Sunkeshi in marriage. They all returned with heavy hearts.

The goddess of luck is most unpredictable and none ever knows her whims and fancies. She smiles on a beggar and makes him a king and a king into a pauper at one stroke. As she had ordained, one day the princes went for *shikar*. After a hot chase, they all converged on to the river for a swim. There was an overhanging branch of a tree which grazed the water of the river, the princes would climb it and dive into the water. By chance, the eye of one of the princes was held by a shining object on the branch. He went for a closer scrutiny. Lo and behold! It was the lost golden hair of Sunkeshi. At this discovery, the prince, both smiled and then wept. When the others asked him the cause of this strange behaviour, he said, 'I am happy because I have found the hair, and I weep because of the thoughtless vow of our father.'

The princes willy-nilly brought it home. As was expected, the discovery of the hair sent a wave of joy and intense sorrow in the palace. The hair was no doubt found, but because of the vow of the Raja, the princess was now to be married to her own brother! Her own father was thus to become her father-in-law! It was unthinkable. How could there be conjugal relations between a brother and a sister? Out of the well into the deep sea! The king cried in anguish to the gods, but there was no way out. The kings of the past never broke their vows because of the fear that the reigning goddesses of the kingdom would desert them. The state would be subject to decay caused by severe droughts and terrible deluges, bringing untold misery to the subjects. The king was in a dilemma aud consulted the royal priests. After deep meditation, they all advised that the vow be honoured and that the princess married to the prince who found the hair. The king was resigned to his fate, and prepared himself to sacrifice his daughter for the sake of his subjects. So a day was fixed for the marriage. The princess was in a greater predicament. All young girls dream of happy lives with their husbands. The poor and the rich, alike, look forward to that day, and the princess was no exception. What a fate? The princess thought and thought and, on the appointed day, before the rise of the morning star left the palace and went into the jungle. There she climbed an old banyan tree and hid in the branches. Soon the people came to know of her disappearance. A thorough search was launched but, she was not found. The palace was agog at the strange turn of events. The party at last reached the jungle where a crow was cawing incessantly:

'Cruelty of luck you all see,
The princess hides in the tree.'

In the olden days, many men could understand the language of the birds and beasts. The party thus came to know about the hideout of the princess, and reported it to her father. The king at once came and addressing the princess said;

'Alight alight oh daughter mine,
The wedding bells are soon to chime.'

And the princess replied:

'Alight I shall oh benevolent Raja,
But tell me first,
Are you my father
Or father-in-law?'

The king was put to great shame at this question. He took out his dagger and thrust it in his heart, dying instantly. Her brothers met the same fate; when she asked them if they were her brothers or brothers-in-law, their pride was hurt to such an extent that they preferred to die rather than answer that question. At last the prince to whom she was to be married said:

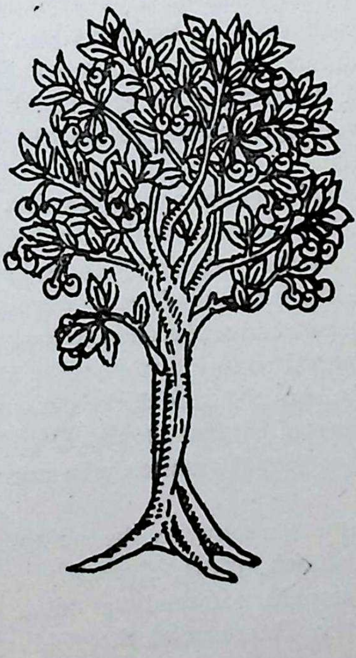
'Alight alight oh Sunkeshi,
The wedding time is soon to be.'

The princess said,

'Alight I shall oh prince,
But tell me first,
Are you my brother or my husband?'

At this strange question, the prince also committed suicide. Fortunately, the tree on which the princess was hiding was, in fact, a prince who had been under a curse for centuries and had been transformed into a tree. The curse was to be redeemed by the blood of eight persons. The drops of blood from the royal family released the curse, and the tree was transformed into a handsome prince. He at once asked for the hand of Sunkeshi in marriage. The princess inherited the kingdom of her father and they lived happily ever after. And the crow keeps on his incessant cawing even now,

'What fate ordains
Unchanged and firm
Like a rock it remains.'



Yota Farsira Tisko Swasnhi

A Pumpkin and His Wife

ONCE UPON a time there lived an old couple in a village. They were issueless. The lady of the house constantly grieved over her lot and went to many temples to pray for a child. She approached many mendicants coming to the village, and performed all the rituals suggested by them. Most of the meagre earnings of the old man were thus spent.

One day, the old lady was cursing her fate as usual. The maize had dried but she was feeling too lazy to put it in the storage bins. Whilst she was sitting in a pensive mood, she thought she heard that her days of worry were over; that God had heard her prayers and sent a child to look after her in her old age. She was surprised to hear this voice and turned her face to investigate. Lo and behold, there was a pumpkin rolling towards her. He told her that she should go away and rest as he had come to keep the maize the in store. The lady was overjoyed.

After some time, she came to the pumpkin and told him that he should take lunch for his father who was working in the fields. The pumpkin got ready at once. He appeared to be a tireless worker. He reached the field where his father was working and, after introducing himself, gave him his food. The old man was equally surprised but was inwardly happy that God had sent them a helping hand.

Days passed and the old couple grew more and more fond of their adopted son. One day, the father and his strange child went out for a walk. The daughters of the landlord were also going for a ride on the same road. The pumpkin saw the *kanchhi* and fell in love with her. He confided in his father about his desire to get married to the youngest daughter of the landlord. The father was reluctant, because not only was his status much below that of landlord, but his child also could not be considered really eligible. The pumpkin was, however, very insistent and would neither eat nor drink. The poor farmer was thus compelled to approach the landlord for the hand of his youngest daughter. Luck again played a part. That night Shiva and Parvati appeared in the dreams of the pumpkin's beloved and gave their blessings to the proposed marriage. Therefore, when the farmer came with the strange proposal, she readily agreed.

The marriage took place with great pomp and show. After the marriage, the girl served her husband and his parents with great devotion. The pumpkin, in turn, would do anything to keep her happy. One day, the newly-weds were going out for a walk. The birds were out on the tree branches adding to the melodious orchestra of nature. Flowers were in full bloom. The fancy of the girl was caught by a flowering tree. She requested her husband to get her a flower. The pumpkin got ready and started to climb. However, his foot slipped and he came crashing down. The pumpkin broke in two and out came a handsome prince! He told his wife that because of certain misdeeds, he was under a *shap*. He had been told that the effect of curse would be over by the devotion of a wife with all thirty-two virtues. She was thus his saviour. They happily went home and the prince told the entire matter to his foster parents. Everyone lived happily ever after.

Legend of Satota Didi Behani

Seven Sisters

'COME MY children, I will take you to the fair,' said the father to his daughters, knowing fully in his heart of hearts that he was about to commit a breach of trust with his own flesh and blood. How wicked the circumstances can get and how badly men can get cornered? Isn't it unimaginable that a father should stoop so low as to scheme to desert his children heartlessly? But it is not always the circumstances alone that drive men to kill their conscience. Most of them take shelter under the pretext of adverse circumstances to succumb to their own ill-nature. Oblivious of the evil designs of their father, the girls readily agreed. When their mother had died, the father was grief stricken, and had decided to devote his entire life to looking after his seven daughters. But time is a great healer. He soon fell for the charms of another lady and married again. To the people he explained that he was getting married so that his daughters could be looked after better. As was expected, the step-mother started ill-treating her step-daughters: all seven of them ranging from the ages of seven to seventeen. She slowly schemed in such a way that even the father toed her line.

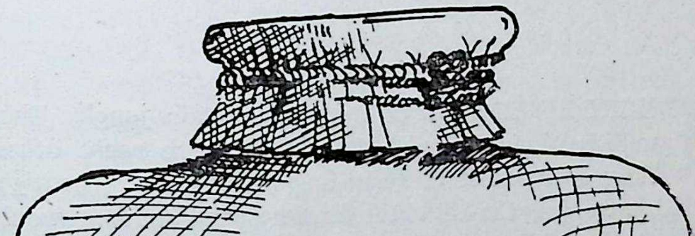
They both admonished the helpless girls endlessly, and made their lives absolutely wretched. The climax came when the mother got around their father and they both decided to get rid of them. So with the sole and ignoble aim of leaving them in the jungle at the mercy of wild beasts, he tried to lure them by promising to take them to the annual fair. Innocent as the girls were, they readily agreed. The cruel father delayed the departure in such a way that they started their journey well after mid-day. By evening, they reached the middle of the jungle and the father suggested that they take shelter for the night under the banyan tree. They all decided to get up early in the morning and go to the fair. The girls were very tired and soon fell sound asleep. The father was just waiting for such an opportunity. He sealed their eyes with wax and returned home to the heartless woman.

Next morning, when the girls got up, they called out to their father, but there was no reply. They also could not see anything. They cried their hearts out for this unexpected turn of events and bewailed loud and long. As luck would have it, the banyan tree was the dwelling place of the *Ban Devta*. He had witnessed the callous behaviour of the father. He took pity on the girls and addressed them thus, 'Don't worry my children, your eyes are closed with wax only.' He gave them detailed instructions on how to reach the spring to wash their faces and regain their sight. *Jethi* led them to the spring. They washed their faces and were able to see again. Their initial joy, however, was soon replaced by intense fear. They were in the middle of a thick jungle, alive with the calls of dreadful wild animasl. They had lost their way and could not go back. Thinking that their father had probably fallen a prey to some wild animals, they searched for him all over without luck. As they were wandering from place to place in search of their father, they were attracted by the lights of a house. Approaching nearer they discovered it to be a palace. They were in two minds whether to move in or go away. At last, curiosity got the better of them and they entered the palace. To their horror, they discovered that the house belonged to a giant who was dozing near a huge platter of food. They were awfully hungry and soon forgot about their fear and sat down to eat. The giant kept snoring heavily. The sisters had their fill and hid the remainder of the food behind a pillar. After that, they moved in the interior chambers of the palace. They hid in the corner of a room from where they could see the giant. After some time, the monster got up. He seemed to be very hungry. He was astonished to notice the disappearace of of his food. He searched here and there and noticed the remnants of his lunch near the pillar. Unintelligent idiots as the race of giants were, he reprimanded the pillar severely, 'So you are the one who has eaten my food. You will soon learn a lesson.' Saying this he hit the pillar hard, injuring his fists. This enraged him further, 'How dare you hit me back? You stupid pillar. I will teach you a lesson.' And saying this he brought a huge staff and lashed out at the pillar with full force. The lifeless pillar broke down and a big block fell on the giant's head, killing him instantaneously. The girls were watching all this from a distance. They were trembling with fear. Seeing the giant dead, they slowly picked up courage and came out. With their entire might, they disposed off the giant's body. Now they were the sole owners of the palace. Their search revealed that the giant had a vast treasure of jewels and pearls. The storehouse was full of eatables. They had no dearth of anything and started living happily. Comfort and security again reminded them of their father. How they pined to be with him and look after him. Such is the love of daughters.

Leaving them helpless, their father went back home with the hope that his wife would be happy and there would be some peace in his life. This was not to be, because nagging is a habit, and habits die hard. She endlessly nagged him and at times, even said that if he could leave his own daughters in the jungle, how could she have any faith in him. 'Who am I? How do I know that in my old age, you won't forsake me? Oh my luck! Curse be on the day I married you.' The man was sick of all this and went back to the jungle to search for the remains of his daughters. He searched hither and thither but to no avail. He was likewise attracted by the palace lights. Approaching it, he discovered that it belonged to his own daughters. They showered all their affection on him and told him to carry as much wealth as he wanted to silence the lashing tongue of their step-mother. He went back with many diamonds and jewels and told his wife, the entire story. 'Oh you stupid man,' said she, 'why did you not take more wealth from there? Will this last us long? When will you ever learn?" Chiding him thus she sent him back.

He went and told his daughters the type of life he was leading. They told him that in that case, they would send a special present for their mother. They put venomous snakes and scorpions in a vessel and covered it tight. They told their father that this was meant for the mother who must open it alone in a room.

The scheme worked and the wicked woman who had wished ill of the seven sisters, died a painful death. The father and the daughters lived happily ever after.



Shyal ra Chituwa

The Jackal and the Tiger

THERE LIVED a pair of tigers in a certain jungle. They were newly-weds and madly in love with each other. They spent most of their time in the den. The tiger would even drag the kill to the den where both of them would eat together. This put a severe strain on scavangers like jackals and hyenas who are mainly dependent on remnants of the prey. Even the hyenas were able to look after themselves to some extent, but the jackals suffered a lot. Most of the members of the jackal community had rather famished looks. One day they held a conference and asked their leaders to do something. The wise old jackal reassured them and promised to solve their problem. He visited the tiger‘s den when the tiger was out for hunting. He admonished the tigeress severely and told her of the effects of confining her husband indoors. Lack of sunlight and fresh air had already weakened him so much that even he, a jackal, could beat him up. In fact, he had the gall to tell her, ‘Let me see him, and I will give him at least three kicks.’

When the tiger came home with the kill, the tigress told him of the visit of the jackal. The tiger was greatly amused by it and brushed the incident aside by saying that the jackal must have lost his head. Next day, while the tiger was out, the jackal came again and repeated the threat. 'So you have not taken my advice,' he said to the tigress. 'Let me meet your husband. I will give him at least three kicks in his buttocks. I am powerful enough to teach him a good lesson.'

The tigress again told the tiger what the jackal had said, but he did not take it seriously. On the following days, the head of the jackals again repeated the threat, and his tone became more and more harsh and overbearing as the days passed. At last the tigress became sick of it and wept before the tiger. 'Either rid me of this menace, or I will go to my parents' home.'

The tiger flew into a rage at this blatant display of bad manners by a mere jackal. 'How dare this rascal bother my wife?' He decided to wait for the jackal the next day and teach him a good lesson. He could hardly sleep that night and came out many times to see if the morning star had risen. At last the day dawned. Sure enough, the jackal came roaring outside, His innate cunning and intuition told him that the tiger was in. So he kept a safe distance. The tiger heard the jackal and rushed out to teach him a lesson. The jackal roared, 'If you have the guts, follow me.' The tiger charged at him with great speed and fury. The jackal was prepared for such an eventuality. He entered a cave which had an opening on both sides. The cave was narrow in the middle that he could pass through easily but the tiger could not. The jackal quickly went across and came back from the previous entry. The tiger was struggling in the middle. The jackal gave him three kicks in the back and said, 'See the result of depriving yourself of fresh air? Here take one, and another, and yet another.'

Thus beaten the tiger learnt his lesson, and the food problem of the jackal family was solved for ever.

Legend of Lobhi Dauray

The Greedy Wood-cutter

ONCE UPON a time, long long ago, there lived a wood-cutter in a certain villiage. He was very hard working and honest. His work, however, required great physical exertion and the returns were meagre. He toiled all day long to eke out a living. He could barely make both ends meet, but dishonesty never came near him. His sole implement for living was an iron axe which he loved more dearly than a child. On non-working days, he would greatly pamper his axe whispering words of love to it, and take lot of time honing it.

One day, he went to the jungle for cutting wood as usual. He selected some dry branches of a banyan tree which were hanging over a pond. He went on cutting wood and caressing his axe from time to time. As luck would have it, his axe slipped from his hand and fell into the pond. Great was his shock and surprise. He almost jumped after the axe. How would he now cater for the needs of his family? They would all starve to death. He came down and tried to recover the axe. The water was too deep and he was a non-swimmer. Utterly helpless and nonplussed, he sat down on the bank and cried himself hoarse, 'O God, have pity on me and my children. What will

I do now?

Jal Devta heard his cries. He came out with a golden axe and said, 'Stop crying my child, here is your axe.'

The wood-cutter eagerly looked at the axe but his look soon changed into a stare of despair. 'This is not my axe', he said, and started cursing his luck again.

The water deity dived in and came out with a silver axe. The reaction of the wood-cutter was no different even this time. *Jal Devta* dived again and surfaced with the iron axe. The wood-cutter was beside himself with joy and snatched the axe from his hand. He hugged the axe and profusely thanked the deity.

The god was mighty pleased with this spontaneous display of honesty, and gave him the gold and silver axes also as present.

Singing happiy, the wood-cutter came with his load of wood and three axes. En route he met a friend who asked him how he had amassed so much wealth to have bought both a gold and a silver axe. Simple and straightfoward as he was, he related the whole story.

His friend could hardly sleep that night. Next day he went to the same tree with branches overhanging the pond. He then cried long and loud his bad luck: how would he look after his family, etc. He was well aware that he had no family. He cried himself hoarse but the deity was obviously taking too long to appear. At last the deity did come out with a golden axe. On enquiry, the wood-cutter said, 'Yes, not only does this axe belong to me, I have also dropped a silver axe and an iron axe in the water.

The deity disappeared telling him that it was not possible to cheat gods.'

Sun ko Trishna

Craving for Gold

ONCE UPON a time there lived a wealthy *seth* in a certain village. He was very rich but was not satisfied. He wanted still more wealth. His only ambition was that he should be the wealthiest man in the whole world.

One day a *yogi* came to his house. The *seth* looked after him with greatest solicitude. The *yogi* was highly pleased and asked the *seth* to demand a boon. The *seth* said, 'I have just one desire. I want that whatever article I touch should turn into gold.'

The mendicant said, 'so be it,' and went his way—with the reminder that the boon would be effective from the following day. In his eager wait for the next day, the *seth* could not sleep the whole night. Whilst the morning star was still shining high in the sky, he got up and went for a walk. He wanted to brush his teeth with a *datun* (neem stalk). As soon as he touched the *datun*, it turned into gold. Which made it impossible for him to clean his teeth. He decided to have a bath, but as soon as he touched the bucket, both the metal (of the bucket) and the water turned into gold. He was feeling very hungry and wanted to have food but the food also turned into gold. Pained and harassed, he went to his wife to seek solace. One touch turned his wife into gold. This was too much and the *seth* cried in anguish. The boon had become a curse! Raising his hands to the heavens, he prayed to God for mercy. The almighty heard his cry and the *yogi* came to that village again. The *seth* begged him to relieve him of his misery, This was granted. The *seth* had learnt his lesson. He distributed all his wealth amongst the poor. Thereafter, he lived in peace and contentment till the last day of his life.

The Brave Prince

ONCE UPON a time there was a Raja who had six Ranis This is the true story of a time when only sons could perform the last rites of a man. People, therefore, laid great stress on begetting sons. That is bad enough for don't we all know that daughters are more sincere to the parents than the sons? What was worse, many men made the birth of a son an excuse for lust and married a number of times. One day, the Raja went out for shikar with his prime minister. On the way, they came to a well where some girls were filling water. The Raja saw a pretty wench and in no time at all fell in love with her. She indeed had all the feminine endowments, that would lure any man. The Raja came back to the palace, but he was very restless. His six Ranis fussed over him, but to no avail. At last the Raja, called his prime minister and told him the cause of his restlessness, 'Mantri, I feel that the girl whom I saw today at the well will bear me a son. I have a strong feeling that at last I have met the right woman.'

The prime minister, was a sycophant, and at once agreed adding that he had had a dream the previous night indicating that his excellency would meet the right girl at the well. The dream had come true. He then sent men to fetch the girl to the palace. In his lust, the Raja failed to notice that the girl had inverted feet and was, in fact, a she-demon, a witch, disguised as a beautiful woman. On reaching the palace, she showed great annoyance for the inconvenience caused to her. The Raja endearingly told her the cause and said that he wanted to make her his Maharani. She declined saying that he already had six wives and moreover, she had no time for him. After great persuasion, she consented but on one condition. Blinded by lust as the Raja was, he agreed and said that he was prepared to agree to all her conditions. The wicked witch said that she wanted the six previous Ranis to be blinded and banished to the jungle. She also said that she would keep their eyes in safe custody. The Raja shuddered at the idea but he had already given his word. He had no choice. He sent all the six Ranis to the jungle where their eyes were gouged out and brought to the new Rani. The marriage was then performed with great pomp and show.

As luck would have it, the third Rani was with a child when they were banished to the jungle. In due course of time, she gave birth to a son who was so handsome that all the birds and beasts of the jungle came to see him. The boy grew up to be an exceedingly intelligent and smart child. He was a favourite of all his mothers. The *jethi ama* supervised his bringing up with the greatest care. *Kanchhi ama*, who by virtue of being youngest was the most energetic, travelled over great distances in the jungle to fetch luscious fruits for the boy. They all doted on him and fussed over him. He also loved all his mothers dearly.

The she-demon did not bear any child to the Raja. But cunning as she was, she took the family priest in confidence and they both managed to cheat the Raja by telling him that he was destined to get a son only after fourteen years of married life.

Time went on. The boy grew up and saw the six springs of his life. This was the time when the witch came to know about his birth and was tortured lest she be discovered. She tried many methods of killing him but the boy was a beloved of the gods and was always saved. At last the she-demon summoned him to the palace and made a great show of love and concern for him. She told him that she wanted to adopt him. The family priest was in complete league with her. Together they convinced the Raja that he should adopt the boy as their son because then, and then alone, a son would be born to his Rani. As was their plan, the priest also advised that after the adoption, the child be sent to his maternal grandparents for a few years. The Raja was by now only playing second fiddle to the cunning witch and agreed to all her suggestions. The she-demon wrote a note for her brother, who was known far and wide for his ferocity and love of human flesh, and sent it along with the boy. In that she explained her whole situation, and asked him to eat up the boy as soon as his escorts turned their back. After all these preparations, she despatched the boy with some of her trusted soldiers.

The mothers of the boy on the other hand, worried a great deal and were unable to bear his separation. They cried themselves hoarse till the *Ban Devta* himself appeared before them and reassured them of the safety of the boy.

The party escorting the boy entered the thick jungle where they felt tired and decided to rest a while. As they dozed off, the *Ban Devta* changed the note instructing the parents and brothers of the witch that the boy was her son and should be brought up with all care.

After many days of travel, the party reached their destination. The boy was looked after well. As time passed, he became a great favourite with the entire colony of demons and came to know all their secrets. The demons taught their magical powers to the boy. They showed him their magic ash which, when thrown on a victim, would burn him to cinder. He also came to know of the seemingly harmless pieces of firewood which could be transformed into deadly snakes and bite a victim to death. He also saw the eyes of his mothers stored and preserved in a vessel.

One day, when all the demons were out on their usual rounds, the boy thought that the time was ripe to finish them off and take the eyes to his mothers and revive their vision. When the demons returned, he threw the ash on them and released the snakes to kill them. He then lost no time in reaching his six mothers and gave them back their sight. Leaving them in the jungle, he went straight to the palace and told the whole story to the Raja, and burnt the she-demon to ashes before his eyes. He summoned the priest and released the snakes to deal with him.

The Ranis were brought back to palace. The Raja was full of shame at the untold sufferings brought on them by his lust. And they lived happily ever after.

Khanay Kura Haru

The Food Stocks

ONCE THERE lived a jackal in a certain jungle. He was very old and grew infirm. Since he could not perform any service to his kind, other jackals deserted him to die in peace. No member of his community would ever invite him to the left-overs of the tigers' prey. Even if he did manage to reach the prey, other members would scare him away saying, 'You have lived a full life *kaka*, now let your children eat.'

He could barely make a living by catching a few mice and old pheasants. Occasionally, he feasted on carrion. He cursed his very existence and prayed to God to take him back. But how can one die till his days in the world are over? He came in front of the tiger many times to provide him with a meal but the tiger would not oblige him. Thus life dragged on.

One day, a hunter came to that jungle with his bow and arrows. The jackal saw him and thought that this was his long awaited opportunity. He passed in front of the hunter to offer himself as a target. But the hunter ignored him. He had not come to kill jackals. What use are jackals any way? The flesh is unpalatable, and the skin is not too good. Oh, what a curse to be born as a jackal!

Soon a deer passed that way. The hunter shot his arrow at him at once, and hit the deer behind the ear, killing him instantaneously. The hunter cleaned the stomach out and tied up the carcass to carry it, when a boar happened to come that way. The hunter thought it was his lucky day and shot an arrow at him. But, as we know, the boar has a thick skin. The arrow only wounded him. He came straight for the hunter. The boar being at too close a range, the hunter could not manoeuvre himself into a position to shoot another arrow. So he took an arrow in his hand to fight the beast. The boar charged with all his fury. In the scuffle that followed, both the hunter and the boar were killed. That is not all. There was yet another casualty. In his blind rage, the boar trampled over a young python which also died. Thus in quick succession, there were four deaths.

The jackal was watching from a distance and very much wished that he was in place of the python to have been rid of his miserable existence. But soon hunger got the better of him. Seeing all the contestants and the delicious python dead at one stroke, he realized why God had not willed him to die yet. He had food for many days and not a soul in the vicinity to share it with. As a first step, he decided to move the food stocks to safety. He mustered all the strength left in him and slowly dragged the bodies to his dwelling. He was almost exhausted by the effort. He wondered whom to eat first. Rather than satisfy his hunger, he started calculating the stock situation; that the boar would last one month, a deer so much more and so on. Life was, at last, worth living. He had food stocks for more than a month. Though the meat would rot but hadn't he been living on carrion for many years. He just could not decide what to eat first. He suddenly remembered that there was yet another item that had the smell of food. He went back to the scene of the grim fight to investigate. Sure enough, the bow of the hunter had been made out of intestines that could be eaten.

He decided to eat that and save the other items for the morrow. With this the old jackal bit at the taut guts. This released the tension of the bow which hit him on the head with a mightly force killing him there and then. The hoarded food rotted till it mingled back with the elements.

Chukli Garne Afno Hani

Backbiting Boomerangs

ONCE THERE lived a lion in a certain jungle. After the death of his father, he became the Raja of the jungle. He was kind and compassionate and never killed for sport. Since life has to feed on life and this is the inevitable way of nature, other animals of the jungle were very happy with their king.

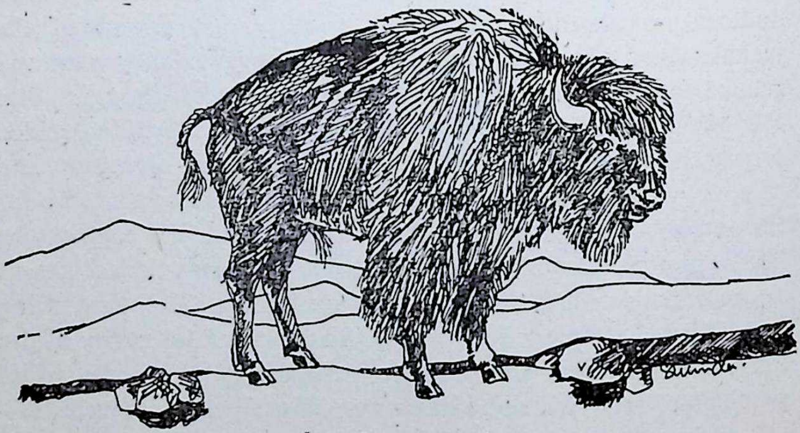
Once it so happened that a hunter came to that jungle to catch the lion. He put a trap and luckily for him, the lion's foot got caught in it. He was a powerful animal and broke the trap. His foot was, however, badly injured. Poor fellow was confined to bed. His servants, the tigers and panthers provided him with the necessary food. His subjects were very unhappy at his injury. They thought it their duty to go and inquire after his health. One and all gathered at his door. The lion was pleased with his popularity.

There was a pair of bisons among the lion's subjects, who had the bad habit of backbiting. With the result that they had strained relations with many denizens of the jungle, especially with one of the jackals. The reason was not far to seek. They were unhappy with the jackal because he never greeted them, which they thought was their due. Wherever they went, they spoke ill of the jackal. The sickness of the lion afforded them a golden opportunity for instigating the lion against the jackal. They went to the lion and told him that they had heard the jackal talk ill of him. He was in fact, heard to say that it would have been better if the lion had been taken away by the shikari. The community would have got rid of his depredations. That was why the jackal had not even come to visit the king. Not only was it bad manners, it was outright disloyalty. It was dangerous to let such a fellow live in the jungle. He would avail of the first opportunity to let down his king.

The lion heard this and flew into a rage. He decided that as soon as he was well, he would seek out this traitor and put an end to his life.

The jackal also had some good friends. In any case, the bisons were not very popular because of their bad habit. The dwellers of the jungle had come to realize that their praises and censures should not be taken seriously. The friends of the jackal heard the bisons and fretted for his life. They went and related the entire conversation to him. The jackal thought that the bisons had overstepped all limits of decency. He decided to pay them back in the same coin. He smeared his paws and legs in mud and sprinkled dust on his body. Thus made up for the act, he went to the lion. After salutations, he begged the lion's pardon for being late. He told him how worried he was at the unlucky affliction of his beloved king. The first thing he did was to pray for the good health and longevity of the king. He then went around the entire jungle to look for a particular herb which he knew was efficacious for injuries sustained from iron traps. But it obviously appeared that the all-devouring, greedy and reckless bisons had eaten all the plants. He then went in search of a veterinarian of the zoo, at a great risk to his own life. But what was his life, he was ready to lay downs the lives of his entire family for the well-being of his noble king. However, while he was there, the superintendent of the zoo happened to come to consult the doctor about the accidental injuries sustained by a pet lion. This rare coincidence was surely the result of his prayers! How else could one explain the coincidence. The doctor told the superintendent that the surest remedy for wounds sustained from steel was the application of the fat of a bison on the affected part. The superintendent of the zoo had then had a bison slaughtered, and the lion felt better with just one application of his fat on the wound.

The point was well made. The lion ordered his tigers to fetch the bisons and kill them. The bisons paid with their lives for their scurrilous habit of backbiting.



Bhagya ko Kura

As Luck Would Have it

'NO, I want to buy the most wonderful thing in the world,' said the boy to his parents. 'After all, I am the one who has found the gold coin.'

One day, while a boy was making houses of mud and sand, his eyes were attracted by a shining object. Close scrutiny revealed that it was a gold coin. He pocketed it at once. He went straight home and showed the coin to his parents. The father said, 'Well done child; we will buy a sheep with it. From time to time, we shall sell the wool and thereby have a constant source of income.' 'No,' the mother said, 'we must not do that. I have never thought much of your sense of judgement. We must buy some food-stuffs so that the family can feed well for some time at least.' 'No,' said the *kanchha babu*. 'The food-stuff will finish in no time and then we will be back to forced fasts! Why not buy a few hens. They will lay eggs. We could eat some and get the others hatched. The process can go on indefinitely.' 'I am not going to agree to anything like that,' said the boy, 'I want to buy the most wonderful thing in the whole world. After all, I have found the coin.'

The boy, being the only child, and spoilt, his will prevailed.

So he went from shop to shop asking for the best and most wonderful thing in the world that the coin could buy for him. The shopkeepers jeered at him, 'There goes the spoilt child. He wants to buy the most wonderful thing when he is himself a wonder!' At last, the boy noticed a monkey performing his tricks in a shop.

'Would you sell that monkey to me for a gold coin?' asked the boy,' 'Why not? In fact I will give you the monkey along with chain,' replied the shopkeeper.

The bargain was struck and the boy came home happily with his monkey to the great annoyance of his parents. Now they would have to feed one more mouth. His father and mother started arguing on who was responsible for spoiling him. The blame and counter-blame seemed to go on endlessly and it led to a quarrel.

As time passed, the monkey grew very naughty. He would jump from house to house creating a nuisance in the neighbourhood. One day he happened to jump over a wall and landed in the house of a giant. He spied around and was attracted by the glitter coming from a room. He peeped in through the ventilator and noticed the giant counting his diamonds, pearls and gold coins. He sneaked in and, as the giant went to fetch more from a box, he picked up some and ran off with the booty to the boy. This process was repeated a number of times till the giant became suspicious. He came to know of the intruder and decided to teach him a lesson. He feigned sleep and as the monkey came again he caught him by the tail. The monkey was, however, prepared for such an eventuality. He blurted out, 'Uncle, I have come from a far distance to look you up. I was wanting to surprise you but, instead, you have surprised me. You are my maternal uncle. Long ago mother had told me about you. Even now she weeps at times when she remembers her sister-in-law, who died leaving you a widower.'

Then addressing him directly he said, 'Uncle, you are still young. Why don't you get married again?'

And without waiting for a reply he continued, 'That is what I have already done for you. I have located a beautiful bride and shown her some of your wealth which I took without your permission. Anyway, it is all safe and will come back to you after the marriage. My would-be aunt is bewitched by your jewels.'

The giant released the monkey from his hold and keenly asked him more details about his new-found sister and would-be bride.

The monkey fully satisfied his curiosity. He noticed the great eagerness of the giant for a second wife, and he said, 'Uncle, let me go now because my pretty aunt will be waiting for me. May I take a few gold coins so that she can get her bridal attire made?'

Saying this he took up a few coins in both his hands and went away. The giant requested him to come again. This way, monkey robbed the giant many times. He handed over all the wealth to the little boy. He disclosed the plan to the boy and told him to get a dummy girl made. Accordingly, the dummy of a beautiful giantess was made and attired in fine clothes. At last the appointed day of marriage arrived. His gullibility, had made the giant part with more than half of his wealth. On the day of the marriage, the monkey went to meet him and said, 'Uncle your days of loneliness do not seem to be over yet. The priests have predicted that you cannot meet your bride immediately and must wait for a few days till the evil phase of the stars is over. The bride will come to you but let her remain in her room without any disturbance. In case you are impatient and touch her, she will immediately be transformed into straw.'

The marriage took place. The girl was transported to her husband's house. She was put on a bed. The giant eyed her many times through the chinks and key-holes. She remained absolutely motionless. This aroused his suspicion and he was desperate to investigate. Not able to contain himself any longer, he opened the room and shook his wife to wake her up. Lo and behold, she had turned into straw! He cried at the top of his voice at the loss of both his second wife and his wealth.

The monkey was, indeed the most wonderful thing in the world that the boy could buy!

Teenota Thug

Three Cheats

‘YOU ARE lucky that you have been seeing gods and goddesses in your dreams! Curse my luck, I only saw a fierce demon who all but devoured me,’ said the third thug to his companions. ‘I did not sleep out of fear. So do not disturb me please and let me sleep,’ Saying this, he slowly closed his eyes and pretended to doze off.

‘No, no,’ said his companions, ‘We must settle the issue now and finish off the remaining sweets before they go bad,’ With this, the two thugs shook their companion awake.

This is the story of three friends who were cheats of the highest order. Naturally, they were, to use a pun, thick as thieves. None in the neighbourhood had escaped their deceit. Everyone without exception ran from their shadows. So quick-witted were they, however, that they always managed to find a fresh prey every day.

Once when they were passing the shop of a sweet-maker, sight of the sweets made their mouths water. Their plan was quickly hatched since they all thought alike. One went to the sweet-maker and addressed him thus, ‘*Daju*, may your business prosper. I am sure it will like that of the sweet-maker of the village on the river bank who made offerings to the river-goddess.

Oh, what a boost the goddess gave his business! Sales were so brisk that he had to employ twenty two-servants and helping hands in one week.'

And then as though talking to himself, he muttered, 'Oh, what was he and what has he become now? What a palatial building he has made! If the goddess is kind even the impossible can become possible. I also want to make some offerings to her to change my circumstances for the better.' And then addressing the sweet-maker he continued, 'Let me quickly buy some, and, if you want, I will carry your offerings also to the goddess on your behalf.'

'No, no, we have no time for that. You buy some and let us go our way,' said the second thug who seemed to appear from nowhere.

'Do not be so inconsiderate,' said the third, 'you must do a good turn every day. The poor sweet-maker has no time. He cannot close the shop to go and make the offerings himself. If he closes, his customers will be disappointed. And, by the way, what way will the goddess Lakshmi enter the shop? What is the harm if we carry some sweets on his behalf as offerings to the goddess.'

'There is no time, why get late? If he cannot close the shop, is that any of our concern?' said the second thug.

'No brother, do not be in a hurry,' intervened the shopkeeper. Just carry some sweets. Surely I am not so mean that I will charge you money for the sweets offered to the goddess.'

And making two packets, he quickly handed them over to the two thugs in spite of the loud protests of the third that they were unnecessarily getting late for the sake of the shopkeeper.

As was expected, the sweet-maker did not charge them a single penny. Having deprived the sweet-maker of a sizable amount of sweets, they quickly made their way to a shady spot and set to making three equal shares. Some of the sweets were two of a kind and could not be shared equally. Thus after making three shares, a surplus of some sweets remained. After a lot of haggling, they decided that those sweets would go to the fellow who had the most beautiful dream that nignt. They consumed their shares and went to sleep, eager for the dreams and the sweets.

In the morning, two got up almost simultaneously but the third slept on. They woke him up for it was time to decide who was to get the remainder of the sweets. So whilst the one was still dozing, the other started relating his dream. 'I had a lovely dream. I was invited by Indra, the ruler of the heaven, for dinner. Whilst we drank nectar and ate the choicest dishes, all his charming Apsaras danced and served us. Oh, how beautiful! What a nice time I had! Surely there could not possibly be anything better than this?'

The third thug who had dozed off again was woken up. The second started relating his dream. He said, 'I was invited by Brahma, the creator himself. Indra was also one of the invitees to the party where I went. But I, being a personal guest of Brahma, had a superior place. Surely, my dream is better than yours. In fact nothing can possibly surpass the charm of this dream.' Addressing the third thug, he said, 'Now let us hear your dream so that we reach a decision on the remainder of the sweets.'

The third thug who still had his eyes half closed dropped his head forward with a jerk as though he was overpowered by sleep. 'Oh, let me sleep. A demon bothered me the whole night and I have not had a wink of sleep. If you are my friends, be kind and let me sleep.'

And he again pretended to doze of. But his friends would have none of that. So he started narrating his dream, 'A demon came in my dream and said that my flesh was saltish, and that he loved saltish flesh. Saying this, he almost ate me but I quickly grabbed the remainder of the sweets and put them in my mouth. Thus I managed to avert a disaster and save myself by the skin of my teeth. As soon as my flesh turned sweet, the demon left me. I must thank you, my dears, that you had left some sweets which came in handy. Otherwise, today you would be mourning my loss. Oh, what a nightmare! I could hardly sleep.' Saying this he again pretended to doze off.

The two thugs at once opened the packet of sweets, but it was empty.

Mero Nani Roee Maryo

Whilst My Child Cries

ONCE UPON a time there lived two brothers in a certain village with their families. Both of them had a daughter each. They lived as a joint-family with complete understanding and accord. People gave examples of their family whenever they talked of the joy of togetherness. But mother luck has her own unpredictable ways. There was an epidemic which killed both the elder brother and his wife. Their daughter became on orphan. The younger brother, however, did everything within his power to bring up the girl and keep her happy. Whenever he bought anything for his own daughter, he made it a point to buy the same for his niece. Many a time the two girls, mistook the items belonging to the other as their own and fought with each other. There was thus a constant argument among the sisters over their belongings, specially over clothes and toys. The wife of the younger brother usually favoured *Kanchhi*, her own daughter, and came to resent the *Jethi*. The love of the uncle for his niece was also viewed with disapproval by the lady of the house. She naturally wanted everything for her own daughter and constantly nagged her husband about this. This led to nasty quarrels at times. The husband, as is the fate of all members of the community, at last had to give in. The matters became so bad that the lady of the house constantly hurled abuses on the helpless girl. She was virtually reduced to the state of a servant in the house. She was asked to do all menial jobs, including grazing the herd. As we all know, animals are more responsive to love than men. One of the goats got very attached to the girl and constantly prayed to God to remove her sufferings. The girls would share her meagre food with the goat who, in turn, gave her all her milk for drinking.

As luck would have it, the generosity of the goat was noticed by Lord Ganesh who blessed her with magic powers. The goat thought that the first beneficiary of this magic power should be the poor little girl. So she look her to a quiet corner of the pasture and offered her some fine dishes for eating. The girl in turn gave her the loaf of chaff that her aunt had given to her. Time went on. The girl gained in health and beauty. Many messages started coming from far and wide for her hand in marriage. The lady of the house thought it to be a good opportunity to get rid of her. She accepted an offer from a distant village. *Jethi* was married in a simple ceremony. At the house of her in-laws, she soon won the hearts of all by her good nature, and gentle manners. She would get up before the rising of the morning star and finish the household chores. Her old father-in-and mother-in-law had little to do except to go to the temple and pray for the longevity of their son and daughter-in-law. She gave birth to a son who was as handsome and charming as his mother.

As soon as the girl left her uncle's house, it fell on bad days. The crops were attacked by insects and eaten by mice. A number of cattle heads died of disease. The old couple started keeping ill-health. One day the family came to the village of their niece on some business and stayed. with her. Seeing the love, respect and affluence enjoyed by the *Jethi*, the old aunt was beside herself with jealousy. A preposterous idea crossed the mind of the cunning old lady: that she should replace the niece with her own daughter. Outwardly she .showered all the love on *Jethi* and her child. She asked her why did she not invite *Kanchhi* to spend a few days with her? She could lend a helping hand to her and it would be a change for both the sisters. It would not only provide some relief to her from the everyday household affairs but help *Kanchhi* learn house-keeping from her. The simple and unsuspecting girl readily agreed.

After a few days, she received a message that *Kanchhi* would be coming the following day. The aunt had requested her to meet her near the old well outside the village. So she did. But what followed was not in the plan. *Kanchhi* threw her in the old well! She had obviously come prepared for the dastardly act. She had brought one set of clothes of *Jethi*, which her mother had stolen earlier. She quickly changed into those clothes and went straight home and masqueraded as *Jethi*. She successfully managed to hoodwink everyone except the child, who would cry and cry.

Jethi's luck was still with her. She knew swimming and did not die as expected by the wicked *Kanchhi*. She noticed an iron staircase to one side of the well. She came out and hid in the old hut near the well.

The absence of the mistress was also felt by the animals, the horse, the cow, the goat and the dog. *Kanchhi* neither caressed them with love nor spoke to them as gently as *Jethi* used to. *Jethi's* heart was full of sorrow for the child. After all, she was the mother. She could hardly bear the separation from her son. As soon as it was dark, she stole into the house. The animals at once recognized the foot steps of their mistress. They threw endearing glances at her. She spoke to them and said :

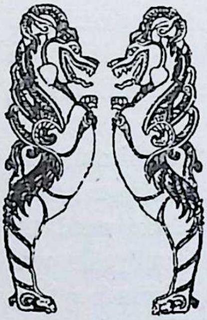
'Oh dear cow, dear horse,
With you all, my happiness lies,
But my mind cannot rest,
Whilst my child cries.'

She went further and the dog came forward wagging his tail. She told him:

'Oh my dog, oh my pet;
With you all, my happiness lies,
But my mind cannot rest
Whilst my child cries.'

She went further to the child's cradle and suckled her son with her love. After that, she put him back in the cradle and fed the animals. Before the rise of the morning star, she was back at her hideout. Next night, the process was repeated. However, the husband was already full of suspicion and had noticed how the child was suddenly quiet. He was, however, too lazy to investigate fully. The third night the same nocturnal round was completed by *Jethi*. Her husband was, however, awake and as soon as he got ready to leave, he caught her. *Kanchhi* tried to raise an alarm, branding *Jethi* a thief, but to no avail. The game was up! Her nose and ears were cut and she was sent back. The family then lived happily ever after.

Mero Nani Roee Maryo



Dhikur ra Kauwa

The Dove and the Crow

'AT LEAST, have the decency of cleaning your beak before you eat my eggs,' said the dove to the hungry crow. 'Have a look at your beak yourself; it is smeared with muck. The holy river is so near. Why don't you go there and clean it before you peck it my beautiful and delicate eggs?'

The crow was taken aback at this presumptiousness. The pair of doves were to lose their eggs in any case. Why should he not respect their sentiments. Thinking this, he agreed to their seemingly meaningless request. 'All right, all right. I will grant you that much,' said the crow. 'I am going to the river and will presently come back. And remember, no tricks with me. I am too clever for you. So do not waste your as well as my time.'

'No sir, I am known for my simplicity, and honesty,' said the mother dove, 'If luck ordains that you eat my eggs, let it be so. You have saved the life of my husband and we are indebted to you for that.' Hearing this, the crow flew off to the river with great expectations of an early return and a hearty feast writ large on his face.

The story is about a crow and a pair of doves who lived on an old banyan tree. Once it so happened that her husband was out in search of food whilst she sat hatching the eggs. He was busy collecting edible material for his wife, when a shikari spotted him. The cruel shikari was about to use his *gulel* when a crow noticed him and, out of sheer instinct, raised an alarm. The father dove heard it and flew off before the missile hurled at him could hit his head and separate his body from his soul! The cunning crow noticed what happened. On returning home he made no end of boasting to the doves about his gallant act of saving the life of the male dove. But for this friendly act, the mother dove would have starved to death in the nest or the eggs would have gone bad. In return for his presumed act of bravery and friendliness, he demanded to eat their eggs! That was the price the doves were required to pay for staying with a bad neighbour and ignoring the age-old saying of choosing one's neighbours with care. The doves had ignored these classic words of wisdom and were now required to learn their lesson the hard way. Which mother would let that happen, but she was helpless. The only thing she demanded was that at least the beak be cleaned before her eggs ware pecked at. Hope has an uncanny way of lingering on and on.

The crow went to the river and said, 'River, river, I saved the life of the father dove. In return for this act of bravery, the mother dove has offered me a feast of her eggs, but she wants me to clean my beak before pecking at them. May I clean my beak in your water?'

The river had flown through ages and had witnessed the wickedness of many generations. He had acqired the power to see through the minds of all creatures. He quickly grasped the situation and said, 'No, do not dirty the entire water. Go and get a pot and take some water in it to clean your dirty beak.'

Hearing this, the crow flew off to the potter.

'Potter, potter,' said the crow, 'I saved the life of the father dove, for that act of bravery and good neighbourliness, the mother dove, has offered me a feast of her eggs. She, however, is an obstructionist and having promised wants to go back on her words. She, therefore, wants me to clean my beak before eating the eggs. I went to the river but the river wants me to get some water in a pot rather than dirty the entire flow. Will you please lend me a pot?'

'No, no', said the potter, 'Do you take me for a fool to make that suggestion. If I keep lending pots like this, how will I ever make a living? I have a large family to look after. I am, however, ready to oblige you on one condition. My wife is sick and I need the horn of a deer for medicine. You keep flying to distant lands and are sure to know where a horn can be found. Get me one and come to claim the pot in exchange,' saying this the potter turned his face and buised himself in his work. The crow was now despairing but the hope of eating the succulent eggs of the dove made his mouth water. He went to the dog.

'Dog, dog, come with me,' said he, 'I will show you where the deer live. Kill one and have a feast. Only let me have the horn and some meat.' And he went on to explain the reason for his requirement of the horn.

'I will be glad to come with you, my dear, but don't you see I am too weak. I have not had a meal for a number of days and have no strength to chase the fleet-footed deer. First get you,' me some milk for my dwinding energy. Then I will come with replied the dog.

The crow was by now sick of the ever growing chain, but now there was a fresh possibility of storing some meat for a rainy day, because the dog surely would not be able to eat the whole deer. And then he would enjoy the feast of the tasty eggs that would revive his youth. So he went to the cow.

'Cow, cow, give me some milk for the dog who will then kill the deer,' said he. 'The deer are your rivals in that they stealthily eat all the grass of the pastures and leave little for you. So here is a scheme beneficial to both of us. I need a deer's horn for the potter who will give me a pot, in which I will take some water from the river and clean my beak, after which the dove will let me eat her eggs.' And he told her the whole story of his agreement with the dove.

'Don't try to be clever,' said the cow, 'Everyone says you are very cunning but I am no fool either. Why should I give you the milk without due compensation? First go and get me some grass.'

Saying this, the cow turned her face and ignored the crow. But the crow was not prepared to give up. He stole an old sickle from a house and went to cut the grass. But to his great dismay, he discovered that the sickle was badly rusted and blunt and was, therefore, unable to do the job. He had to sharpen it. He had no choice but to go to the blacksmith. The crow went to him and told him the whole story. He also promised him a share of the deer's meat. The blacksmith became quite ready to oblige. He put the sickle in the fire to remove the rust before honing it. The crow impatiently watched the slow process and kept requesting him to hurry up. His presisent requests irked and irritated the blacksmith. He took the sickle out when it was red-hot and told the crow to take it. The wise crow was too hungry, and sick of the persisent delay. For once he forgot that haste makes waste. He at once grabbed the sickle in his beak, burning it badly. He cried with anguish and forgot all about the eggs. He decided to steal the eggs as is his normal habit and not take undue advantage of a situation. For the present, he was content to fill his belly with muck and knick-knacks as usual.

The doves hatched the eggs in due course and brought up their family. They later shifted their nest to another tree and lived in peace for ever.

Satoto Bhai ra Behani

Seven Brother and a Sister

'WE HAVE come to take our dear sister away,' said the eldest brother. 'We want her to help us in the performance of the puja of Shri Satyanarayan. The priest has assured us that an offering of a lotus plucked by a lady, with all the thirty-two signs of virue, will bring us good luck. The goddess Lakshmi will herself come and bless us.'

'Oh yes, by all means,' said the unsuspecting husband oblivious of the fate that awaited his wife.

This is the story of a girl who had seven brothers, six of whom were married. Being the only daughter, she was a great favourite of her parents. The brother also loved her deeply. Her parents never admonished her or beat her even with a stick of flowers. God had endowed her with all the feminine charms. She had a very sweet nature. She was ever ready to do the odd jobs for all and sundry, and was greatly delighted to be of service to others. It was said of her that she was incapable of harming anyone, even inadvertently.

When she came of age, her parents received messages for her hand in marriage from many noble young men. They selected their son-in-law with the greatest care and gave away their daughter in marriage. They missed their beloved daughter a lot but were happy in her happiness They were, however, not as lucky with their sons as they were with their daughter. All of them, except the youngest, were given to leading easy, fruitless lives with little scruples. The parents worried a great deal on that account. Thinking, as most parents do, that marriage, and the consequent enhancement of responsibilities, would mend their ways, they married six of them to as good girls as possible. But how can habits change? The marriages made little difference to the boys who remained as easy-going, selfish and self-centered as ever. Since all living things must die, the parents breathed their last before the marriage of the youngest son was solemnized.

The brothers inherited the entire wealth of their parents. For some time, they lived in as much luxury as money could provide. In course of time, they came to their proverbial last penny. Like most vile men, they turned their attentions to the jewellery of their wives, and soon saw the last of that too. Rather than do something positive about their dwinding fortunes, they wanted an easy buck and went to a *tantric* pujari of great renown for advice. He advised them to sacrifice a woman, with all the thirty-two signs of virtue, to the deity of the village-pond and eat her flesh! That would bestow untold them. This advice from the pujari also made them part with fortune on what little money they possessed.

The brothers thought a lot about the woman with the requisite qualities among all their relatives and acquaintances, and agreed unanimously that there was none better then their own sister! After deep deliberations and heated discussions, they went to her place and asked her to accompany them to the village to perform the puja of Shri Satyanarayan. As per the advice of the pujari, she was required to pluck a few lotus flowers from the village-pound as offering for Shri Satyanarayan As all girls are, she too was greatly excited at this opportunity of going to her *maitighar*, and got ready to accompany her brothers.

The brothers gave her a rousing welcome at the village, and held a feast in her honour. On the appointed day, all of them had an early bath and went with their sister to the pond. She looked all around in the pond but could not see a single louts flower. The *Jetha* told her:

'Go in the water sister dear
Then you shall see the lotus clear.'

The hapless girl entered the pond and waded up to knee deep water but could not locate any lotus. Addressing her brothers, she said:

'The water is knee deep,
But no lotus I can see,
Which way should I go,
Oh dear brothers tell me.'

The *Sayenla* replied:

'Go further and deeper, oh sister dear,
Then you will see the lotus clear.'

The unsuspecting girl was eager to make a success of the puja of her brothers. She moved deeper till the water reached her waist but could not locate any lotus. She turned to her brothers and shouted:

'The water is waist deep
But no lotus do I see,
Which way should I move,
Oh dear brothers tell me.'

The wicked and selfish brothers had already reconnoitered the deep parts of the pond. So the*Mayenla* said:

'Move right, oh sister dear,
Then you shall see the lotus clear.'

The sister moved up again till the water came upto her shoulders. She could however, not see any lotus. Still she did not supect any foul-play and asked her brothers:

'The water is up to the shoulders:
But no lotus I can see,
Which way should I go,
Oh dear brothers tell me.'

The *Kayenla* replied:

'To the lotus you are very near,
Move left, oh sister dear,
Then you shall see the lotus clear.'

The girl moved as directed and with one step the water reached her chin. She could barely keep her mouth and nose above water for breathing. Not able to see her brothers any longer she shouted at the top of her voice,

The water is up to the chin,
But no lotus I can see,
Which way should I move,
Oh dear brothers tell me.'

The *Rayenla* replied:

'Move right, oh sister dear,
Then you shall see the lotus clear.'

The unsuspecting girl, in her eagerness to help the brothers moved as directed and stepped into the deepest part of the pond. She was drowned and soon her body surfaced. The wicked brothers did not even move their little fingers to help her. As soon as her body started to float, they took no time to recover it and cut it up into pieces. The *Kanchha*, who was the only unmarried brother, was full of remorse. He was, however, not in a position to open his mouth. He did not eat his share of this flesh. Instead, he buried it under ground.

Time went on. The human sacrifice made by the heartless brothers made scant difference to the fortunes of the family. They remained as poor as ever and were virtually reduced to beggary, except the yougest brother who went to a far-off land and made a fortune.

After some time a fine reed sprouted at the place where *Kanchha* had buried his sister's flesh. It was a plant of rare beauty and brought forth colourful flowers. One day, a musician passed that way and cut the reed. He did not notice that blood oozed out from the junction of the cut. He made a flute out of the reed. The flute gave out very melancholy and heart-rending notes. One day, at the end of his usual performance, the musician was surprised to hear a sweet feminine voice emanate from the flute:

'Beloved was I of my parents,
My husband loved me as his dear wife,
I was killed by my brothers,
The youngest saved my life.'

The musician was suprised at this touching note and thought that the instrument was a magic-flute. He held performances at many places where great crowds gathered to hear him play the magic-flute. At last he reached the town where the husband of the girl lived. He played the flute before a large gathering. At the end, the following lyric came out from the flute:

> 'Beloved was I of *Ama Rani*,
> My *Babu Raja* loved me dear,
> My husband, loved me as his dear wife,
> Killed was I by my cruel brothers,
> The youngest saved my life.'

And lo and behold! At this last heart-rending note, warm saline tears flowed out of the flute.

The husband who was among the spectators, recognized the voice of his beloved wife. He offered one hundred and one gold coins to the musician for the flute but he refused. The bargain was at last struck at one thousand and one gold coins. The husband hugged the flute and took it home. There he put it to his lips before the idol of the *Devi*. Closing his eyes he played on the flute for hours on end. At last he opened his eyes and to his great and pleasant surprise, his lips were resting on the petal fresh cheeks of his wife! His love had revived her life.

The sister remembered to send some money to her brothers. After all, she was their sister.

Yamraj Sang Bhent

An Appointment with Yama

GOJAY WAS struck dumb with awe at the gruesomeness of the murders committed so cold-bloodedly before his eyes. A huge mass of wealth, in fact, the veritable treasure of Kubera, the god of wealth, lay before him. After the death of the four robbers, he was undoubtedly the sole owner of this wealth. He was, however, too dazed by the quickness of events of the last few hours. At that moment the snake, transformed into Yama, addressed him thus, 'It is not your time yet Gojay. When it comes, it comes. And till it comes, none can harm you. You can walk on live ambers or swim the seven-seas full of monsters, and still no harm will come to you.'

Gojay was taken aback and stood speechless for some time. He taxed his brain to say something, but his mind was a blank, and almost in a state of shock at the events that had passed before his eyes in such a quick succession. In any case, he was not a very quick-witted person and, in spite of thinking hard, he could not figure any thing apt to say.

'It is your destiny. Take this wealth and enjoy the worldly pleasures. Your last moment on this earth will be after fourteen years and fourteen days. The place is that yonder tree,' said Yama, pointing towards a huge, lonely tree in the distance.

This is the true story of two bosom friends, Gojay and Chuppay. They were both simpletons and did menial jobs for all and sundry to eke out a living. They keenly heard the tales of exploits of the men from their village who had travelled to distant lands and made fortunes. Those tales, true and false, many of them undoubtedly exaggerated, always kindled their imagination. One day, they decided that they too should move out and do something big. Accordingly, one fine morning they packed their meagre belongings and set out to the east in the direction of the rising sun. They decided that they would keep moving in the direction of the sun which would surely guide them to their coveted destination. Walking till mid-day, they reached the out-skirts of a thick jungle. They decided to rest a while and take their lunch. Their appetite had been sharpened by fatigue. Whilst they were relishing their meal, a crow, who was a messenger of Yama kept cawing:

'Take your last meal.
Take your last meal.'

Neither able to follow, nor, in any case, bothered about the meaning of the call, they enjoyed their frugal meal because they were very hungry. After the meal, they decided to relax awhile because the sun was overhead and could not guide their steps. As they lay back to recline, they were startled by a rustling sound coming from their rear. They had barely turned their faces, when a huge buffalo charged towards them, snorting angrily. They had no time to react. Soon the buffalo was on them. It came straight for Chuppay and lifting him up on his horns,flung him to the ground, goring him and trampling the life of his body. Gojay was terrified and went cold and numb with fright. He was now all alone. If he went back, people would demand to know the whereabouts of Chuppay, who had already departed on his last journey. If he moved ahead, he was alone and would not know where to go. 'What is left in this world anyway?' He thought and went towards the buffalo with the hope that. in its fury, it would also kill him But the buffalo was now as meek as a pet goat. In spite of severe and profound provocations, the buffalo refused to be goaded. Gojay considered death by drowning. He was about to set out for the river when the buffalo transformed himself into a snake a started moving in the direction of the sun. Gojay's curiosity got the better of him or, perhaps, some latent force guided him, and he followed the snake. The reptile led him to a deserted palace built on a mound in a clearance of the jungle. Gojay heard some voices and went inside the palace to investigate. He saw two robbers standing with drawn scimitars. There were piles of diamonds and gold coins near by. Gojay hid behind a pillar and listened to them.

'If we kill them, we can have all this wealth between two of us,' said one.

'Yes, we can settle in a distant town and start our lives afresh. Maybe, we can get married and rear our own families,' replied the other.

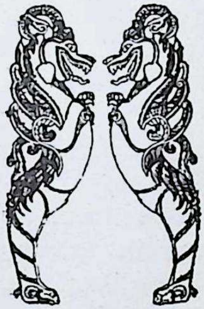
'Oh yes, with one stroke of luck, we can move out of this life of hide-and-seek, and constant danger and uncertainty. Remember, as soon as they enter, thrust the scimitars in their backs, and cut of their throats while they are still under shock,' said the other.

Gojay listened with awe; he was soon to witness murders! He thought he would intervene and maybe lose his own useless life. The thought had hardly crossed his mind when two more robbers entered, and the two present (in the palace) pounced on them and killed them. Gojay again had no time to react and resigned himself to the events. The two robbers, their hands still smeared with fresh blood, made two equal piles of the wealth and were about to depart when one noticed a packet of sweets brought by the other two. It had so transpired that while their two companions looked after the wealth, the other two had gone to buy eatables. And they were as unprincipled as the couple who waited at the palace. They too had planned to put an end to the lives of their companions by poisoning their food. As soon as the two murderers took the sweets, their bodies shook, with severe convulsions and, within minutes their souls left their bodies. Gojay was stunned and came out of his hiding place when the snake appeared as Yama to tell him of his own destiny before disappearing.

Gojay amassed the wealth and went in the direction of the sun. By nightfall, he reached a town. There he posed as a big trader from a distant country. He bought costly apartments and started living in style. His wealtb soon attracted many friends and admirers. He became the headman of the town. Soon there were proposals for marriage and he was tied in wedlock to a pretty girl. In this happiness, he completely forgot of his tryst with Yama. Whenever he did remember, he jeered that for once, Yama was wrong. There was no chance whatever of his going back to the wilderness to keep his appointment. Thus the time passed. He enjoyed life to the brim. The goddess of luck was very kind and favoured him in every undertaking. His wealth multiplied day by day. His children grew up to be handsome and lovable. He took to the costly sport of hunting. Life went on.

One day, he was out hunting when the earth was shaken by severe tremors. He saw the town where he lived engulfed by the mother earth in a cloud of smoke and dust. There could be no survivors. The horse on which he was riding fled in panic and took him to the very tree shown to him years ago by Yama.

'What is there to live for now? My wealth, my family, my friends are no more,' and for the first time in many years he thought of his friend Chuppay. Overpowered by disgust he kept his appoinment with Yama by hanging himself from the tree pointed out to him many, many, years back.



Yota Jivit Manchhi

A Man Alive

ONCE A mahout took his elephant to a pond in a forest for a drink. God Yama also happened to be there, and was astonished to see a small man handling a big elephant with such ease.

When the elephant had had its fill of water, the mahout took him back and tethered him. Yama went to the elephant and asked, 'O great elephant, you are as big as a mountain and seem to be mightier than anyone else, why then do you act and move like a subdued dog from place to place. Can you not thrash that small man and live with your tribe?'

The elephant replied, 'Yama, you are perfectly right but you have not experienced the wisdom and shrewdness of man. Men are always wise and they can control and drive any animal as and when, and where, they want. You always deal with death and have not come across a clever, wise and living man, you are obviously unaware of their sharp mind and intellect.'

Lord Yama returned to *Yamlok*. One day he called his messengers (*Yamduts*) and ordered them to bring before him a man who was alive. The messengers obeyed him and caught hold of a man who was dozing on his cot. He was a Brahmin by caste. When he was being taken to the *Yamlok*, he woke up with a start. Seeing himself carried by the *Yamduts*, he was a little frightened and astonished. With folded hands he asked them, 'I am not dead yet. Where I am being taken to?'

The *Yamduts* replied, 'We have been ordered by our Lord Yama to bring a living man for him. We are, therefore, taking you to him.' Hearing this, the Brahmin began to plan some ruse with which to bribe Yama. And in a flash he planned out his strategy. He took the pen and paper and wrote.

> *Dear Yama,*
>
> *My blessings. I have come to know that you desire to have a living man in Yamlok. The rules of God have specifically laid down that only the dead can be taken there. As soon as I came to know that you had sent your duts to bring a man who was still alive, I incarnated myself as a Brahmin. Although I had known all about your plans, I decided against rebuking you in the presence of others. Kindly meet me at Vaikunth. I shall wait for you there. But remember this secret is not to be divulged.*
>
> *Yours Vishnu.*

On reaching *Yamlok*, the *duts* produced the man before Yama. The Brahmin handed over the letter that he had written earlier. Yama read the letter and turned pale. He stood before the Brahmin trembling with apprehension, and ordered his *duts* to clear out of the room. The Brahmin, then ordered Yama to go to *Vaikunth.* Meanwhile he took Yama's sceptre and started to rule his land. He released the other offenders who had been kept under duress.

Yama on the other hand, appeared before Lord Vishnu in *Vaikunth.* The Lord was indeed, astonished to see Yama there and asked him the reason for his sudden appearance. Yama replied, 'Lord, I am here on your orders—those you gave in your human incarnation—and I beg of you to forgive me.' Vishnu was clearly puzzled and said so. On hearing Yama's explanation, the Lord burst out laughing and told Yama, 'Yama, your *duts* made a mistake of bringing a clever Brahmin to you, who tricked you and sent you here. Now, I hope, you are aware of what happens if you abduct a man who is not dead. Remember that God has ordained man to be the supreme creature on this earth. Now you go back and send that Brahmin back with due respect. And let this be a lesson for you.'

Yama felt foolish and returned to the *Yamlok*. He realised that the elephant was right and ordered his men to take the Brahmin back with ceremony and respect.

Batho ko Katha

The Story of a Crook

'HOW CAN I proceed on my errands on an empty stomuch? And how can I walk with a badly repaired shoe?' thought Batho to himself. 'First things first. I should get my shoes repaired and have a hearty meal. Then only will I be fit to proceed further. And if I can not provide myself with these minor amenities, how can I hope to make a future?' he concluded, and made a bee-line for the bazaar.

Batho, as his name indicates, was a crook. He lived in that yonder village near the river junction. He waged a constant battle of wits to make a living by unfair means. Basically, he was too lazy to engage himself in any active pursuits. He was card-sharp and invariably won at gambling. Soon, however, people stopped playing dice or cards with him. Perforce, he had to resort to other tricks. Since his way of life had a built-in element of insecurity, his wife was sick of him and his tricks. She nagged him endlessly. Their house was alive with her curses, abuses and cries. As was expected, Batho turned a deaf ear to her. In fact he openly advised others that the best remedy for a nagging wife was to turn a deaf ear to her. His wife came to know of this and decided to precipitate matters further. 'You will either work to earn your living or get out,' she said one day with an air of finality.

'I would rather get out. When there is always a fool available to part company with his money for my sake, why should I work?' Batho retored.

'All right, then there is no place for you in my house. Get out,' shrieked his wife.

Batho felt insulted for the first time at the tone of his wife which was grossly impolite. After all she was dependent on him. She would learn her lesson in a few days and come after him. He put on his shoes and moved out. Searching his pockets, he discovered that he was penniless. He had however reached a point of no return. He was hungry and his first problem was food. He had no face or desire to return home. He decided to go to some far off place to make a fresh start. But for that he must have a good pair of shoes and his stomach full. Thinking this, Batho went to bazaar but, the people of his village were wise to him, and difficult to fool. Before undertaking the repairs of his shoes the cobbler would demand, or at least hope to see, some money on his person. He did not want to waste time and set out for the next village on his route of exploits. Reaching there, he got his shoes repaired from the cobbler. Putting them on with confidence, he told him that he had no change and would presently comeback to give the repair charges to him after a glass of *Jhanr-ko-Jhol* (rice beer) and refreshments. He took his fill at the shop. He told the shop-keeper that as the cobbler owed him money, he would just holler out and tell him to make the payment. Saying this he called out to the cobbler, 'The money,' and made some gestures and signals. Then he went to the sweet makers's shop, ordered lot of sweets, some for eating, and some to be packed. He told the shop-keeper that the *bhattiwali* had yet to return him his money and he would ask her to make the payment to him. After that he exhcanged some signals with the *bhattiwali*. The cobbler, the *bhattiwali* and the sweet maker thought that they were to take their dues from the other. Feigning that he had a long distance to cover, Batho then departed post-haste.

After finishing the job in hand, the cobbler come to claim his wages from the *bhattiwali*. Both of them together then went to the sweet-maker. They were all suspicious of each other which led to a heated discussion among them. The confusion, allegations and pell-mell attracted a number of people. This led to further altercation and confusion lasting a long time, till the arrival of the washermen. The washermen, poor devils, were themselves sent on a wild-goose chase by Batho.

On his way from the village, Batho saw some washermen on the river bank. They were washing many colourful and costly clothes. Batho took out his packet of sweets. He smacked his lips as he ate and muttered 'Oh I wish the good man would distribute sweets every day. Oh how tasty they are and how nice that they cost me nothing.' Saying this and words to this effect, he continued to make a show of his enormous pleasure. This had the desired effect on the washermen.

'Where did you get these sweets?' asked one of them. 'Oh I wish I could get some more. I got them free', replied Batho. 'But where did you get them?' the washerman repeated his question. 'There is a good man of religion in the last village. He is on a visit there. Oh, these sweets are so tasty,' Batho replied. 'Did he give you these sweets?' The washerman asked. 'Yes he is distributing them free.' Batho answered. 'Will he still be there?' the washerman asked.

In the mean time, all the washermen had collected around Batho. 'Oh yes, if you rush, you will get them, otherwise, he may go to the next village,' Batho replied. 'Will you look after our clothes,' one of the washermen asked? 'Yes, for a while. But come back soon,' Batho said.

Batho thus sent the washermen on a wild goose chase. When they left he decamped with some selected clothes. The washermen reached the village and saw the cobbler, the *bhatti-wali* and the sweet-maker fighting. It took them some time to discover the cause of the squabble and the culpirt, who had caused this confusion. They told the quarrelling men that their query was enjoying sweets on the river bank. They all returned to catch him but he had disappeared with the clothes.

Batho's next victim was a wealthy trader. From a distance he noticed a caravan coming back with laden porters and ponies. His scheme made, he quickly hung the clothes on a tree and started to water the tree. As the caravan passed by, each man asked him the cause of his strange behaviour. He shouted back that they had no business to disturb him and his wonderful tree. At last the trader came by, riding his horse. Curiosity also made him ask the same question.

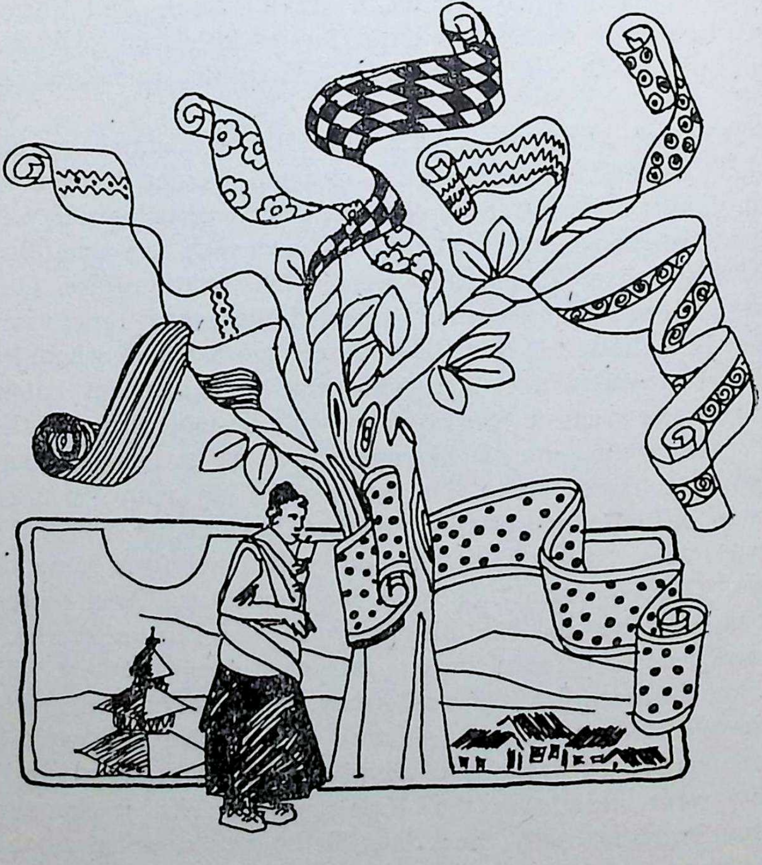
'Don't disturb me and my wonderful clothes-bearing tree, go your way,' replied Batho.

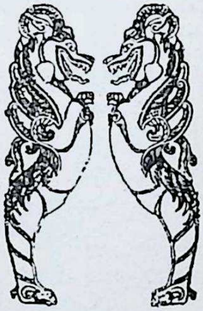
The merchant hesitated for a while and then asked him 'Would you like to sell it?' 'Batho pretended he had not heard the question. 'Would you sell this tree to me?' the merchant asked again. 'Not if I have a choice. My daughter is getting married and I need some money. The tree has already borne some fine garments. I am watering it and soon it will bear me some more clothes. I will sell them to collect the money.' After a little pause he added, 'In any case, the price may be beyond your means.' 'At least let me know your price', the merchant asked eagerly. 'Three thousand Rupees. And I have been watering it for last two days. So the clothes borne by the tree so far will be mine,' replied Batho with a calculated air of disinterest.

The merchant was worried that Batho might change his mind. He took out the money at once and handed it over to him. Batho collected the clothes and muttered to himself, 'Oh God what cursed luck that I have to part with my tree. But my duty to my daughter is greater than anything else. Oh, how helpless I am.' He then pocketed the money and went away in a haste. Enroute he met some more people whom he tricked one way or the other. Thus waging a constant battle of wits, he went to the capital town. He soon attracted the attention of the gentry by his expensive dress and extravagant ways. His fame spread. He was invited by many men of status for dinner and often joined them in gambling where he always won. At last he was invited by the Raja for a game of dice. The Raja asked him what his name was. Quick-witted as he was, he said that his name was '*Kanchha Babu*', which literally means paternal uncle (a father's younger brother).

In the meantime, the washermen, merchant and other victims of his deceit were on his trail and reached the capital. They were told that the Raja was playing dice with the stranger. They went straight to the Raja's palace. The washermen recognized the costly dress that Batho was wearing as the one stolen from them. The merchant who knew the king well took courage and approached the players. Batho had seen them all but feigned unrecognition. The king introduced Batho as *Kanchha Babu*, meaning uncle. This put the fear of god into the merchant. How could he dare put any blame on the paternal uncle of the king. He discouraged the others also and they all left in dismay.

Batho won a lot of money from the king and came back home to his nagging wife. Seeing so much wealth, the shrew shut her mouth. Batho managed to keep his pocket always full.





Souteli Ama

The Stepmother

A WOMAN IS a repository of tender emotions, and gentle feelings. But what goes wrong with a step mother. She stoops to any depth to harm her step children.

In *Satyug*, there lived a very poor family under the shadow of the Gauri-Shanker mountains. It consisted of a brother, his sister, their father and a step-mother. The step-mother treated both the children with hatred and malice. Because of a shortage of cots, both the brother and sister slept in the same bed. In order to bring them to ignominy the step-mother played a heinous trick on them. She put a newly-hatched snake in a glass of water and gave it to the girl to drink. The girl unknowingly gulped the snake. Days passed by and the little snake started developing in her belly, making her waist swell in girth. The sister also became very weak because the snake devoured all the food that she took. The step-mother now thought of taking undue advantage of the situation. She called on the village headman and his council and told them of the incestuous relationship between the brother and the sister. The village headman and his Panchayat declared both of them guilty and banished them from the village.

They took refuge in the dense forest. The jungle was full of fruit-bearing trees and many animals and birds. The boy would catch the animals in his snare and the girl would cook the choicest dishes. Thus they lived happily and kept praying to God to deliver them from loneliness. One day, the sister became unconscious. While attending his sister, the boy saw a snake coming out of her mouth. As soon as the reptile saw the boy, he slid back into the belly of the helpless girl. The brother thus discovered the real cause of his sister's pregnancy. He kept thinking of various ways of making his sister get rid of the menace. At last he went to the village and fetched a jar full of milk, And the next time his sister became unconscious, he put that milk jar in front of her. The snake came out to drink the milk and entered the jar. The brother closed the lid at once and trapped the reptile. He then buried the jar. Rid of the burden the girl started regaining her health. On the day of the *Bhai-duj* festival, the girl went in search of flowers to make a garland for her brother. She reached the place where her brother had buried the snake. A beautiful flower was blooming there. The sister plucked the flower and made a pretty garland out of its petals. After applying the tilak, she held out her hands to garland her brother. He warned her not to garland him lest she should repent later. But his sister could not understand his relutance and garlanded him. Immediately the brother turned into a snake. The reptile went to the step-mother and bit her. She soon breathed her last. The sister ran after the snake with cries of 'brother, brother.' But alas! the snake glided inside a big hole. The sister waited there and wept for many days. She would neither eat nor drink. She prayed to Nag Karkotak to send her brother back from *nag lok*. At least, Nag Karkotak came in the form of a serpent and asked her why she wept. The girl narrated the whole story to the serpent and concluded that if her brother was not returned, she would fast unto death. Nag Karkotak was moved by her devotion to her brother and said that he would try. He played on a *Veena* near the hole. After a long time, the snake came out of the hole and started to sway rythmically to the music. Nag Karkotak, then gave him back his human form. Thus the brother and the sister were reunited, and they lived happily ever after.

Kharayo ra Tisko Mitra

The Rabbit and His Friends

ONCE UPON a time there lived a rabbit in a jungle. He was good natured and possessed a keen sense of humour. He was fond of company and could never stay alone. He had many friends and boasted a lot about his popularity. He entertained his friends lavishly. Because of this, not only did he almost always remain under debt, he also neglected his family to a great extent. Some elders of the community advised him from time to time, and cautioned him but to no avail. The rabbit always talked of his innumerable friends who, he bragged would do anything for him.

One day some wild dogs came to that jungle. Seeing a well-fed rabbit, their mouths began to water. They stalked the rabbit and almost caught him. The leading dog, however, tripped over a fallen branch of a tree and fell down. This alerted the rabbit and gave him time to escape. The dogs soon formed up again and chased him. Fortunately for the rabbit, he found one of his good friends, a horse, grazing on the way. He went straight to him and requested him for help. The horse replied that the dogs were also his friends and never bothered him, although they could collectively kill him. How could he favour one friend against another? Saying this, the horse bent his long neck and started grazing again. The rabbit ran fast and went straight to his friend, a crow. But the crow said that although he could help anyone in the air, how could he possibly come down to ground level to help him. The dogs would catch him in no time and make a good meal of him. By evening he would be fully digested. Moreover, his wife had just hatched the eggs and needed his help to collect food for the young ones. How could he leave his own family starving and come to his aid?

The rabbit looked back and saw that the dogs were almost on him. He ran with all his might. En route he came to the lake and asked another good friend, a tortoise, for help. The tortoise said that he had no objection in taking the rabbit to his underwater dwelling, but that would only drown him? In case he gave him a ride and kept afloat, the dogs who were good swimmers would be more than a match for him. Thus the rabbit was abandoned by all his dear friends. At last the pursuers and the pursued reached the edge of the thickest part of the jungle. The rabbit ran hardest and dodged the dogs under the cover of bushes which had many times served as his shelter and his home. The dogs lost his scent and thereby, the opportunity to catch him. The rabbit then remembered what the elders had been telling him all the time. The best shelter you find is in your own home, and the best helping hands are your own.

Chatur Shyal

The Clever Jackal

AND WHY should you disclose your true feelings and intentions to your enemies? In fact that is the last thing you should ever think of. In case Chaturay Shyal had done that, his body would have mingled back with the elements and his soul would have been wandering around the universe!

A jackal called Chaturay Shyal was a dweller of the thick jungles in the Terai. Near his cave, there were many villages. Chaturay frequently helped himself to the choicest roosters and hens. At times he even devoured some kids. His wisdom was known far and wide. In his community, he was equated with Birbal of Akbar's court. He lived by a constant battle of wits. Whereas he would go and steal the chicken, it was mainly the other members of his community who were chased and beaten.

Once a poultry disease killed many birds. The villagers became alert about their meagre possessions and invariably kept some dogs. This created a sudden dearth of food for Chaturay. One day the sky was overcast with thick clouds, and there was a little nip in the air. Chaturay felt like eating a chicken. His mouth watered at the very idea. He quickly rigged up a plan and collected some of his followers. They went outside the village and, as coached and ordered by Chaturay, began shouting. 'Watch out, watch out, look at the skies.' The villagers came out of their homes and started scanning the skies. This gave Chaturay a golden opportunity, and he quickly snatched some healthy roosters and took them away. The villagers did not even know what had happened. This way, Chaturay managed to trick the villagers a number of times and enjoyed a hearty meal for many many days.

One day another member of his pack decided to play the same trick on the villagers. He was, however, caught. After a thorough beating, he told the villagers that the real culprit was Chaturay. He also promised to help them in trapping Chaturay.

Chaturay was not aware of this scheme and unknowingly walked into a trap. The villagers decided to torture him to death. They first dragged him on the hard stones and on a dry river-bed This was decidedly painful. Chaturay, however, resorted to a trick. As he was being dragged with fury and force, he burst into a full-throated laughter, said 'Aha, how lucky I am! I myself had thought of killing the lice on my body rolling on these hard stones. All thanks to these villagers for helping me get rid of the menace.'

The villagers heard this and stopped dragging him on stones. Instead they dragged him on the grass. Chaturay protested and said, 'Why are you dragging me on the grass? Do you want the lice to suck my blood? God will punish you for this crime.'

The men were happy that their enemy was being tortured. After some time, they decided to hang him to death. Whilst the men were discussing this plan, Chaturay come to know of it. Seeing death staring him in the face, the quickly thought of a plan and addressed the men thus, 'So you want to kill me. It is better to lose one's life than one's freedom. But I hope you know that the life of a jackal is in the stomach? I myself want to get rid of this life of suffering. What is the point of living when I have already lost my freedom?'

The villagers thought of teaching a lesson to the other thieves of the jungle, and hung Chaturay on a tree that was visible from the jungle. Chaturay feigned death. Night fell and the creatures of the wilds started moving around in search of food. As luck would have it, the sneak from Chaturay's pack (who had sold him out), passed that way Chaturay was looking for such an opportunity. He called him out from a distance and said, 'Oh thank you brother. It is because of your kindness that I am enjoying the swing. Just come and see how nice it feels.'

The foolish fellow was taken in by this and requested Chaturay to change places for a while, so that he too could enjoy the swing. Chaturay came down and hung his companion. Thus he regained his freedom and lived by wits for many more years.

Teenota Mitra ko Katha

The Story of Three Friends

WHEN LUCK smiles on a man, even his foolish deeds are looked at as acts of great wisdom! This is so well-illustrated by the story of three beggars who were fast friends. Each one of them had a physical deformity. One was blind, the second a hunch-back, and the third, lame. They stayed together and by mutual co-operation, seemed to be doing quite well. Early in the morning, with the first ray of the sun, they set out from their home for begging. After the day's collections they returned to their dwelling and shared their earnings. A deep-rooted bond of friendship developed between them—a bondthat adversity alone can foster. They grew very fond of each other and if one came back late the others fussed over him a lot. Since they had human love,their lives seemed to be lacking in nothing.

One day, they went out begging as usual. As luck would have it, the blind man stepped on a sharp object. He felt with his fingers and picked up an iron-spike. Thinking that it might injure another fellowhuman, and not knowing any safe place to throw it, he brought it home for possible use. The lame man similarly tumbled over a hammer and brought it with him. The hunch-back saw a long iron rod and brought it home. That year, the rains were scantly and the crops all but failed. Many people started resenting the daily rounds of the beggars. Some even admonished them by calling them parasites. They grew sick of this trend and decided to leave the place to try their luck elsewhere. They collected some food-stuff and set out. After walking many miles, they came across a dense forest. They were apprehensive of losing their way in the jungle, and even of losing their lives to the dangerous animals residing there. They almost decided to go back. As they were hesitating over their next move, they heard the bleating of a lonely goat which had probably been separated from the herd. They caught the goat and tied a rope around its neck. Assured of their meat supply for a few days, and considering it to be an omen of good-luck, they decided to proceed on their journey. They cautiously entered the jungle and moved on. After a few miles, they were attracted by a faint glimmer of light. They decided to investigate and immediately set out towards it. On nearing the source of the light, they discovered it to be coming from the windows of a beautiful palace. They approached it cautiously and circled around the palace to ascertain the presence of any other human beings. The blind man, whose hearing was the most acute, confirmed that the palace appeared to be unoccupied at that particular moment. So they decided to move in. They went into each room but met no one there. The palace was beautifully furnished and the store was full of eatables. They sat down to a hearty meal. The goat was not used to seeing such a place and was missing the herd. Hence she kept bleating.

The palace actually was the property of a giant who was out visiting his friends and relatives in the neighbourhood. When he came back, he was surprised to see the doors locked from inside and heard the strange sounds of the bleating of the goat. His surprise slowly changed into feelings of mingled rage and fear when he thought that probably some demons had occupied his house. He went near the door and mustering enough courage shouted, 'Well, well, I can hear the odd sounds that you are producing. Either come out and leave my house, or let us fight it out.'

There was no reply except the bleating which grew in volume—the goat had been terrified by the giant's shouts of rage.

The rightful owner of the house was flabbergasted and said, 'All right, let me at least see how you can pinch my finger?' And he pushed one of his fingers through the key hole. The three friends were calmly looking for such an opportunity. They made good use of the iron-spike and pierced the finger of the giant with their combined strength. The giant cried in anguish and pulled his finger out. However, he could not give up his dwelling so easily. He decided to try yet another time. 'Yes, yes I admit you fellows can produce a peculiar sound, and pierce my finger; but let me see if you have the power to give a blow on my hand.'

He then thrust his hand through the window bars. The friends gave a fierce blow with the hammer and the giant's hand went numb with pain. He gave a shrill cry and pulled his hand out. The giant, however, had not yet given up. He again roared 'I will not go away till I have seen how you guys look'. He then tried to peep through the keyhole. The friends seized the opportunity and thrust the iron rod straight into his eye, blinding him. The giant had had enough and took to his heels. He reached his neighbourhood and panting hard, related the whole story. The giants listened with rapt attention. They however, thought it incredible that there were mightier beings on earth than they. An old giantess came and volunteered to accompany him to investigate. She was also foolish enough to try the same tests and got a similar treatment. Both of them, panicked and ran back. The community was eagerly awaiting their arrival. By now all the gaints had collected at a place. They asked for the cause of their flight and fright. After due deliberations, it was decided by the elders that all of them should go back together.

In the long interval between the disappearance of the two giants and the reappearance of the community, the friends had decided to have a meal. They slaughtered the goat and prepared all kinds of dishes and delicacies. They were preparing to satisfy their hunger when the giants reappeared. After loud consultations and discussions they decided to make a giant ladder with the giants standing on the shoulders of the other to reach the roof. This way, they would approach their adversaries from a position of advantage. The owner of the house volunteered to bear the weight at the bottom saying that he would gladly bear all the weight, but inwardly happy that he would occupy the safest place. This way one of the giants reached high enough to peep into the house from the upper ventilators. He saw only human beings and exclaimed in delight that not only was there nothing to fear, but there were sufficient grounds for rejoicing as their most delicious food had reached them! The other giants lower down in the ladder could barely believe this and asked him to investigate thoroughly before arriving at hasty conclusions.

As luck would have it, the three friends were oblivious of the impending disaster and were hotly debating from which end they should start eating, from the upper end or lower end. Partial affluence had, for the first time, brought up this issue of protocol amongst them. As is customary, the eldest, or the man of highest social position sits to the extreme right or the upper end, which is considered a place of honour. However, it is normally the youngest, who eats first. So the friends were debating whether to start from the upper side that is the right, or the lower end, or the left. The blind man who had an extra loud voice was arguing that they should start from the lower end, that is from him. The giant who was the owner of the house and lowest in the ladder had already had enough. His eyes had suffered a grievous injury. All he heard was that the eating was to begin from the lower end! Once bitten twice shy! He eased out from the lowest position and ran off. The ladder of giants came crumbling down, one falling on the other. Most of them were killed and the others broke their limbs. The three friends were not aware of these happenings and were enjoying their dishes with great relish. Loud wails of the injured giants however attracted their attention and they decided to investigate. They saw some giants dead and caught glimpses of others in flight. Soon it was all quiet. The friends decided to make good their escape. They ransacked the house for all the jewels and valuables and left at a fast pace. After walking many miles without pause or rest, they reached a village. The evening star had already risen. So they decided to spend the night in the village. But with wealth, greed had already raised its ugly head. The hunch-back and the lame man decided to get rid of the blind man and pocket his wealth. They caught a cobra and cooked its head for the blind man. At meal time, they served it to him with great expectations. But luck had planned a surprise for them. The poison of the snake slowly restored the sight of the blind man. As he noticed the pieces of snake in the food, he grasped the evil designs of his friends. 'So you wanted to kill me,' he said.

The friends were taken aback and were speechless for some time. Soon they regained their composures and said, 'We only wanted to cure you of blindness so that you could enjoy the wealth. The remedy was suggested by a *vaid.*'

The blind man was convinced, and the friends settled for the night. To hide their embarrassment, the hunch back and lame man kept telling stories well into the small hours of the night. Next day they were woken by the crowing of the cocks and they resumed their journey. By nightfall, they again reached a village and decided to spend the night there. Greed had, however, not yet left them alone. The lame man and the man who had miraculously regained his eye-sight, decided to put an end to the hunch back and share his portion of the wealth. At night, while the hunch back was snoring, they gave a severe blow at his hunch with a log. Luck again played its part well. Rather than breaking his back, the blow only cured his hunch and he got up fully restored. The two managed to convince him of their noble intentions, and the friends spent a comfortable night. Next, as you can now imagine, was the turn of the lame man. A herb poison which was chosen by the two friends to kill the lame man straightened his leg.

Thus, the adventures of the three friends brought them back to their village as normal human beings and rolling in wealth. Prosperity brought the need of a wife. They got married and lived happily ever after.

Yota Ghamandi Bhyaguto

The Proud Frog

THERE ONCE lived an old frog in a pond by the jungle. He was a bully and all the other frogs were afraid of him. He had three handsome grown-up sons. He was very proud of himself and his family. The young frogs went together to the jungle in search of food and play. The eldest wanted to explore the jungle alone but his father would not permit this. He would insist that all the brothers go together and chided the eldest for his eagerness to go alone. The more his father stopped him, greater was the curiosity of the frog to see the jungle alone. One day, whilst they were out for play, the young frog gave a slip to his brothers and went ahead. He kept moving farther and farther. At last he came across a sleeping elephant. With each breath, the elephant's stomach would distend and deflate with a great amount of noise. He was an object of great wonder for the frog, who thought that he had discovered an expanding and contracting mountain. He decided to dig in, and make his own house there, and rear a family. No sooner did he try to bite what he thought was earth, the elephant got up with a roar. This scared the young frog who started to tremble. Being too near, he could not make out what he was confronted with. As soon as he saw the strange animal moving he took to his heels and ran for his life. He arrived home panting hard. His father admonished him and asked him the cause of his panic. He related the whole incident. His father flew into a rage at his cowardice. How could an animal be bigger than him? The son told him of the huge belly of the animal. The frog expanded his belly fully and asked 'surely it can't be bigger than this.' The young forg replied that it was much bigger. The old frog drank a lot of water and again distended his belly, looking at his son. His son again shook his head in disagreement. The old frog was, however, not prepared to admit defeat. He again took some more water and expanded his belly some more.

In his ignorance he forgot his capacity and his size. The process went on till his belly burst and he died.

Lato

The Simpleton

ONCE UPON a time, there lived an old woman in a certain village. She was very clever and mean and was ever ready to trick the community. People were sick of her unscrupulous pranks. She had only one child, a son. God always balances the cunning of one member of a family with the stupidity of another. Her son grew up to be a simpleton. People called him Lato meaning an idiot. The boy came of age but no one came forward to offer the hand of his daughter in marriage to him. This was a matter of great dishonour for the lady and she worried a great deal. How would her son pass his old age? Who will cook for him and her when she grew very old? How would the family name pass down? These thoughts constantly tortured her. Seeing the other old ladies of the community doting on their grand-children, she was at once filled with envy and jealousy.

One day she told her son that since no one was ready to offer his daughter to him, he should himself try and do something about the matter. Why should he not look for a good girl and fall in love with her?

'But how can I do that? Even if I fall in love, it is not necessary for the girl to fall in love with me,' he said. That was too wise an answer for an idiot. The mother told him of an ingenious plan. He should go and sit near the village spring where all the young girls came to fill their pitchers. He should select a beautiful girl and throw flowers on her. In case he could not find flowers, even small pebbles would do. In case she happened to look at him, he should give a smile. If she smlied back, he should move foward and introduce himself.

If this plan failed in the case of one girl, he should try it on another, and yet another till he succeeded. This way love would bloom in a few days. Seeing a good girl, he must not lose the opportunity to woo her.

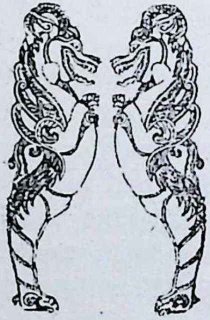
The boy went to pluck a rose and was pricked by a thorn. He cried out in pain. He remembered that the mother had also mentioned small pebbles. That might be a good idea, he thought and collected some stones and went to the spring with high hopes. Soon the daughter of the village headman came. Lato remembered his mother's advice that he should seize opportunity with both hands. How to do that was his first problem. He thought that his mother possibly meant that he should pick up a big stone with both his hands and throw it at the girl to attract her attention. And that is exactly what the poor idiot did. The stone hit the girl on her head and instantly killed her. Lato thought that she was playing the fool with him. He went to her and caressed her but she would not respond. He thought she was being modest. He whispered in her ear that he was not going to leave her and that in fact he wanted to carry her to his home and marry her. He lifted the body and brought it home. Seeing the dead body of the daughter of the village headman the old woman was frightened and she dreaded the outcome. She told his son to take the body back and bury it in the jungle. He should then go to his maternal uncle's place, and not come back till she called him.

The boy took the body to the jungle and buried it. He forgot the instructions of his mother and rather than proceed to his maternal uncle's house, came back home. When he was near the house, he remembered her instructions. He was, however, very hungry and decided to have some food before setting out for the journey.

The mother had cooked some food and had gone out to fetch water. Lato thought that in the absence of his mother, God had cooked food for him. He started eating and shouting at the top of his voice, 'I am a great man. God has cooked my food! I have killed the daughter of the village headman and no one has even come to know of it.' His shouts reached the ears of the village headman, who was grief stricken. But he immediately went out to investigate the matter. He came to the old woman's house. On inquiry, Lato told him all that had happened.

The mother had, in the meantime, made a different plan to cover up the murder. She caught a goat, killed it and took it to the exact spot where her son had buried the girl. She dug the girl out and buried the goat in her place. She had hardly finished the job when she heard voices approaching the site. The villagers accompained by Lato and the headman came there and dug up the place again. To their surprise, they found a goat and there was no trace of the girl.

Lato went mad with fright because he thought the goat to be a ghost. And the mother, who had been cunning and clever with everyone else lived a miserable life till death ended her sufferings.



Rajkumari Aboli

The Silent princess

AS THE story reached its climax, Aboli, the silent princess, lost control on her tongue and blurted out, 'Oh, what a tragic end to the life of such a faithful animal!'

After a pause, as though she was surprised at her own voice, she added, 'And that too for the sake of a faithless and heartless consort! How cruel a man can become?' 'But, my dear, it just proves how cunning the members of the fair sex can be,' said Dev Bhuj. 'In fact they can stoop to any degree to achieve the object of their hearts, or to avenge themselves of their adversaries?'

'No,' said Aboli. 'It just proves how foolish and grossly callous men-folk can become. After all, did the king have no regard for the faithfulness of the dog? Or was it that he lacked judgement? I feel he was a slave of his passions, and if men get blinded by their lust and agree to do anything to please the fair sex, why blame the women?'

The news that she has spoken at last spread like wild fire. Her parents had already kept everything in readiness. A *jaimala* was brought and Aboli garlanded Dev Bhuj, accepting him as her husband.

Once upon a time, the Raja of a certain state had an only daughter. She was blessed with peerless charm and beauty. One day the Raja went out hunting and took his daughter with him. Fate had ordained that the horse carrying her panick at the sight of a tiger. She fell down. In the melee that followed, she was rescued by her escort, but she had suffered a serious shock, and she lost her voice. The Raja called in *vaids* from every corner of the state. They tried all the rare herbs and *aushadhis* (medicinal preparations) on her but to no avail. The Raja performed many *yajnas* and *pujas* in all the temples, but the object of his worry still lived like an incubus over his head. Time passed but the dictum that time was a great healer, sounded like a mockery. One may get reconciled to one's own sufferings, but not to the sufferings of a child. Since the princess did not speak for years, she came to be called Aboli, the silent princess. People even forgot that her real name was Geeta.

Aboli grew up to be a woman of immense feminine charms. Many Rajas and princes sent messages and earnest pleas for her hand in marriage. The Raja had no means of ascertaining the wishes of his only daughter for she was still speechless. He was in a predicament. No one could understand or share his worry and suffering. He could neither give his daughter in marriage without accertaining her wishes nor keep her with him for ever. What was to be? The Raja spent many sleepless nights and grew pale with worry. At last the *Raj-Purohit* advised the Raja that he should hold a *Swayamvar* for her, and that she would marry anyone who succeeded in making her talk. That was, indeed clever advice. The Raja agreed that was the best course. And he announced his daughter's *Swayamvar* with the necessary condition. Many suitors came from far and wide to claim her hand in marriage. After many tries, bordering even on the ludicrous, all of them left heartbroken and unsuccessful. At last arrived a prince, Dev Bhuj, from a southern state, beyond the mountains and the jungles. He told the princess that he had come only to meet her and tell her of a true story and ask her for her opinion. He was not really very keen to marry her. This aroused the curiosity of the princess about this strange suitor. She became keen to hear the story for which Dev Bhuj had come from such a great distance to seek her opinion. Dev Bhuj, however, took leave of her for a couple of days to see the capital of her father and other places of interest in the kingdom. This enhanced the curiosity of Geeta all the more. At last, when the interest of the princess was fully aroused, Dev Bhuj started the story.

Once, in the remote past, there lived a king in a distant land who had a very charming wife. The king was madly in love with her and she fully reciprocated his affections. One day, the king thought of testing her love. He went for shikar and killed some deer. He soaked a few of his clothes in blood. He put the stained clothes on the saddle of his horse and asked one of his courtiers, who was known for his histrionic talents, to go to the queen and tell her that the king had been killed by a tiger. He did. The events then took an unforeseen turn as events some times do. As soon as the queen heard of the tragic death of her husband, she fell in a swoon and shock. After a day, the king came out of hiding to see the result of his scheme. He was shocked to learn of the sudden death of his beloved wife. He wept in bitter tears. It was already late in the evening when the funeral procession was taken to the cremation ground. The king was at the head of the procession and kept a steady wail of his misfortune. As is the custom, the dead are not assigned to the flames after sunset. By the time the procession reached the cermation ground, the sun had already set. The body could be assigned to the fire only on the following day. So the Raja remained with the body of his beloved consort while all the others came back. At mid-night, Shiva and Parvati heard the loud wails of the man. Parvati asked Shiva about the cause of his misery. Mahadeva told her the entire story. Parvati was moved by the stark tragedy, and asked Shiva to revive the queen. Pashupatinath replied that that was the realm of Yama, the god of death, and that he was unable to do anything without consulting him. Yama was accordingly summoned. Yama said that the lady was in fact due to die and whatever happened was in accordance with her destiny. The only way of reviving the Rani now was by some individual volunteering to forfeit a portion of his or her life for her. Parvati was sure that the Raja himself would be quite prepared to do that. Shiva and Parvati than went to the Raja who was oblivious of the consulations that had taken place among the gods, and was wailing pitiably. Shiva told him of the method of resurrecting his queen and asked him if he was ready to give a little of his own life to the Rani. The Raja agreed at once. His wish was granted by Yama. The Rani woke up as a young girl of sixteen, at the prime of her youth, because she had shed as many years as the Raja had given her. The Raja on the other hand, grew into an old man! They were no longer a match for each other.

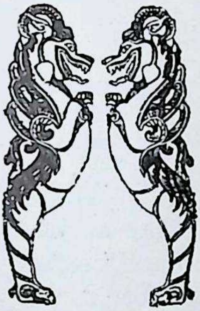
We are all familiar with the unhappiness that befalls marriages between the young and old, and the tragic consequences of such alliances? The Rani soon got tired of the impotent advances of the old Raja. She developed illicit relations with a young and handsome courtier. The Raja was not aware of all this. He was mostly busy with the *vaids* and was hopelessly trying to regain a bit of his lost vigour. He had a faithful dog who seemed to resent the turn of events and the unbecoming behaviour of the Rani. Whenever the paramour of the young queen came to her bed-chamber, he created such a racket by barking that many times the lovers had to part company in haste and dismay. This aroused the wrath of the queen. She was however, unable to do anything about the matter. She had to employ all sorts of decoys to go to her lover. The couple became so sick of the vigilant dog that they decided to get rid of him somehow.

The old Raja was madly in love with his young queen and did everything in his power to please her. One day, the cunning lady got hold of an old cot and lay on it crying, 'Pain, pain.' The Raja went to the side of his ailing wife as soon as he came to know of her state and enquired the cause and the possible cure of her suffering. She told him that she had an attack of a chronic disease from which she had suffered when she was unmarried. It had become dormant for many years and had suddenly erupted. It was cured only when she had a bath with the blood of a dog. Saying this, she gave a cry of intense pain. The Raja asked her to tell him all that she wanted to. She haltingly said that he himself had a fat enough dog who could be killed!

At this juncture, Dev Bhuj told Aboli that the remainder story would be told the following day. Aboli, however, at once spoke out saying, 'Oh tell me, tell me, what happened.'

Dev Bhuj cooly replied that the Raja of course was foolish enough and murdered the dog and his faithless wife did manage to get rid of the obstacle in her way!

The news of Abolj regaining her speech spread at once. She was married to Dev Bhuj and they lived happily ever after.



Bal ra Budhi

Brain or Brawn

MAY IT be a man or a giant, none can ever hope to win by brawn alone. It is intelligence that usually comes out victorious. And if that brain happens to be that of a woman, none can overcome her. Men and giants are far too gullible and fall an easy prey to feminine charms. Here was a mighty giant, who had lured and eaten many men, put to eternal sleep by a woman.

Once upon a time, in the remote past, when men and giants lived together in the world, there lived a basket-maker in a certain village. He would go early morning to the jungle to cut bamboos and *nigalu* (cane) to make baskets with. After the rainy season, he would first cut the bamboos on the fringes of the jungle and, as, the days passed, he would move deeper and deeper. One season a giant came to live in the jungle. He started luring men and children for his cooking-pot. One day, he saw the basket-maker and his mouth watered. He posed as the *Ban devta* and lured the man saying,

'If you need a bamboo fine
    come further, come further,
If elastic cane need thine
    come further, come further.'

The bamboo-maker thought that the god was pleased with him and moved further into the jungle. The giant was waiting for just such an opportunity and grabbed him. He hypnotized him and in that senseless state, he asked him about his house and certain other essentials. His plan was to impersonate the basket-maker and gobble up his family. He transformed himself as the basket-maker and went to his house. As usual, he had a wash and sat down to sort out the bamboos and the cane. Whilst he was busy doing this, he said to the basket-maker's wife, 'Tomorrow, I won't have to go to the jungle because I have enough material to work for a few days. My darling, cook the choicest dishes and let us make merry.'

The giant then set to cutting the material into suitable lengths for the baskets. The lady went to him and as usual offered to press his legs and feet. The gaint declined for fear of discovery because giants always have their feet turned backwards. This aroused the suspicion of the lady. She was a shrewd woman and could smell a rat. She went to the imposter and insisted on lending him a helping hand. This way, she managed to steal a glance at his feet. She was horrified to see that the toes were reversed. She was worried about the safety and well-being of her husband. However, her immediate concern was to get rid of this menace. She cooked a great many dishes and put a sleep-inducing herb in the food. The giant had not tasted so many delicacies earlier and he devoured the food before falling into a deep sleep. The lady got enough time to further her scheme. She opened the main hole in the room that led to the cattle-shed on the ground floor. Directly below the hole she kept a number of pointed-stones. Then she oiled some peas and spread them from the bed of the giant to the hole.

After the effect of the herb was over, the giant got up and decided to make mince meat of the family. He got up grinding his teeth and unknowingly put his feet on the peas. He had a nasty slip and fell through the hole, head first. Falling on the pointed stones, his head was smashed and he died instantaneously. The lady was awake and was just waiting for such an opportunity. She went down and cutting his body into pieces, put them into a wooden-box. Leaving the doors open, she returned to her bed to steal a few winks of sleep.

'Open doors attract thieves,' so goes an old saying. As luck would have it, a band of thieves happened to see the open door of the basket-maker's house. Coming closer, they noticed the wooden-box and were tempted to steal it. The wooden-box was too heavy to be moved by one man. They secured the box with sling ropes and carrying it on bomboos staves, hurried out with their load. Taking it to the jungle as fast as their feet could carry them, they opened the box and received the fright of their lives. They ran helter-skelter and never got together again for their nefarious deeds.

The wood cutter's wife located her husband after a day's search. In due course, he regained his senses. The locality was thus rid of the menace of the giant as well as thieves for all times to come.

Siru ki Bakhri

The Blessed Goat

MOTHER LUCK must always have her way and no one can really predict her moods and fancies. There once lived in a village a man and his wife, who got a lovely daughter after many years of married life and prayers to various gods for a child. But as luck would have it, as soon as the daughter was born, the woman died. The man was heart-broken, but time is a great healer. Like many other men, he resorted to the age-old pretext of needing someone to look after the house and the child and married again. Soon they had another daughter and, as was expected, the step-mother started illtreating the elder child whom she called Mainchha, Dhon-Cholecha and Siru, out of contempt. The innocent girl had no one to turn for help, and was resigned to her existence till matters became really intolerable. She had been told by her father that there was a goat which was a favourite with her late mother. She would take the goat aside and weep in front of her. The step-mother would often give her bread cooked from chaff, which she shared with the goat. One day, the goat spoke to her and said, 'Do not worry. You bring the loaf given to you, and in exchange I will give you tasty food,' Thus when Siru took the herd out for grazing every day her favourite goat would give her choicest dishes in exchange for her loaf. This went on for many days. Siru regained her lost health and started to grow into a beautiful girl. Her step-mother became very jealous and asked her own daughter to go and investigate the cause for this, because she suspected Siru to be either selling the milk or drinking it herself. Next day, the younger sister insisted that she would accompany the elder when she took the herd out grazing. Siru was simple at heart and told the *Kanchhi* about her favourite goat. This way Siru also fed her younger sister. Cunning daughter of a cunning mother, *Kanchhi* hid some rice under her nails, and showing it to her mother she told her the whole story. The jealous lady lost no time in killing the goat. Siru was thus left friendless. One day she took the herd out grazing, when she noticed a tree laden with ripe and luscious fruit. She climbed the tree and started picking the best fruit. As luck would have it, a couple of giants passed that way. They requested her for some fruit. She asked them to spread their cloth on the ground on which she would throw the fruits. The giants said, 'Oh child, why do you not climb down a little and hand over the fruits yourself. Why spoil the ripe fruits by throwing them on the ground?'

The innocent girl came down and was kidnapped by the giants. When she did not return that day, her step-mother was glad, and considered it as a good riddance. The father did show some concern but was happy that he was now spared the constant nagging. There was no one to show concern about the little lost girl.

The giants took her to their palace in the thick jungle and told her to wait while they went out on some important business. They promised to give her the choicest food after their return. Dazed by these events, Siru sat down in a corner and waited for the giants. She was suddenly surprised by a strange voice calling her. She looked around and saw a mouse addressing her, by name, 'Siru, Siru, your life is in danger. The giants will kill you. If you give me some bread, I will save you.'

She thought that the poor rat was probably hungry and gave him some bread. The rat told her to collect all the wealth that she could carry and disappear before the giants came back. He also told her to keep throwing chilly-powder on the way to eliminate her scent. The giants would thus lose track of her. When Siru reached her home, the step-mother refused to open the door. Siru shouted that she had brought enormous wealth with her, which would help them live a comfortable life. Her mother asked her for details and was half dead with jealousy. Surely her own girl could get more wealth? She briefed her fully and told her to go to the fruit-tree the very next day. Sure enough, the giants came and kidnapped her in the same fashion as they did Siru. At the residence of the giants the rat came out to ask for bread from the girl, which she flatly refused. The giants came back in due course and ate her up, and left her skeleton hanging outside her house.

Next day, the mother got up with great hopes and expectations. She was irritated by the constant cries of a crow and threw a stone at him. The crow was a messenger of Yama. He told her about the skeleton of her daughter. The wicked woman died of shock. Siru and her father lived with ease and comfort for the rest of their days. And the man never married again.

Shaitan lai Chinauti

A Challenge to the Devil

THE STORY goes that once during the time when the race of giants shared the Earth with men, there lived a king in a far-off state to the north. He was a benevolent, just and kind-hearted ruler, ever-ready to make any sacrifice for the good of his subjects. He had one vice, he boasted that he did not consider any personal sacrifice big enough for his subjects, and that he cared a devil for personal comforts. One day the devil himself heard his boasts and decided to belittle him. As luck would have it, a very severe drought broke out in the kingdom. Crops failed and the people craved for two square meals. As was customary and a common practice then, every man approached the king for help, some even openly blamed him. The royal priests were consulted. As the devil had willed, they predicted that the only remedy was the sacrifice of either the prince or the king; preferably the prince. Now the prince was married and had a young and lovely wife. He was out hunting at the time of the prediction. When he returned late in evening he saw his young wife lying on a broken cot shouting 'pain, pain.' Her eyes were red due to excessive weeping. The prince consoled her and asked her the cause of her misery. She told him that she had come to know that there was an intrigue in the palace and that a plot had been hatched to murder them. Nothing short of the death of both of them would satisfy the blood lust of the scheming opponents, and suggested it would be safe for the two of them to flee—even waiving aside the formality of meeting his parents. The prince was so deeply in love with his young wife that he consented without demurring. They quickly packed some belongings and, while the king with a heavy heart awaited the prince at the dinner table, made good their escape with the help of some servants who had all been possessed by the devil.

There was no choice except to sacrifice the king who gladly ascended the altar. The drought ended, and a new king was elected from among nobles.

The prince and his wife fled to the jungle. The prince was not aware of the prediction of the priests. His wife had not given him any chance to find out details. They went deeper into the thick jungle, and kept moving in spite of the black darkness all around. At last they were attracted by some lights at a distance. They groped their way towards the lights and reached there after some time. The prince went in first to reconnoiter before he let his beloved wife in. He went around the house and was attracted by a noise from a room. He tip-toed in to investigate and saw a giant in the throes of deep sleep. Had he wanted, he could easily have thrust his scimitar in his heart, but he was a prince and princes have a sense of honour. They do not kill a sleeping enemy. So he woke the giant up. As luck would have it, the prince was still wearing his shikar dress, which contained shining metal plates for the chest and head. As they got ready for the duel, the giant saw his own distorted reflection in those glistening metal-plates. He thought that the prince was aided by many fearful giants. He surrendered without a fight. The prince locked him up in the rear room and, having eliminated the danger, called his beautiful wife in. They were now the owners of this palatial building with all its fabulous wealth. The prince had so far no time to think of his beloved parents and kingdom. Now that he did, he suffered from feelings of nostalgia and remorse, but it was senseless to go back now. He was at a point of no return.

Next morning, the prince instructed his wife not to open the room at the back, and went out hunting. He disguised himself as a merchant and wandered off to the state of his father. There he came to know all that had transpired. He was happy at the love of his charming wife who had helped save his life. So he returned to her with renewed love.

One day when the prince was away, she opened the forbidden rear-room and saw the giant. He was a handsome giant and it took him little time to allay the fears of the young lady. He persuaded her to play a game of dice. The lady always found it difficult to pass the time when her husband was away and gladly welcomed this change. Soon a love-affair developed between the giant and the princess. The prince was, of course unaware of this development. He was too deeply in love with his wife to notice any change in her behaviour. His faithless wife, and the giant decided to kill him one day. The giant was pleased with the scheme—he could make a splendid repast of the prince, and have the princess to make love to. One night, as the prince was sleeping by her side, she put a noose around his neck and asked him if he had any last desire. The prince said that his heart was with the people of his state and should, therefore, be transported via the stream of his native land. The woman then strangled him to death. The giant relished the body of the dead prince but spared his heart, which he put in a boat rigged out of leaves and the bark of a tree. As luck would have it, the boat was pulled in by the fishermen. To their great surprise, they saw an infant smiling in the boat. The king of that land happened to be without child. He was told of the story of the child in the boat. He summoned the fishermen, and adopted the child, who was brought up as the future ruler of the state. In due course of time, the prince grew up and ascended the throne. As for his faithless wife, she became a shrew and the giant, fed up with her constant bickering, ate her with as much relish as he had her cuckolded husband.

Na Bhane ko Katha

The Incomplete Tale

MANY A delicate human feelings is marred by elements of doubt and unresolved misunderstandings. How prudent is the thought that where there are sound relationships and bonds of love, it is better to be cheated than to doubt without cause? And how true it is that a doubting mind knows no peace. It is on account of this element of an over-suspicious mind that a Raja lost one of his most faithful servants.

Once upon a time there was a Raja who ruled a kingdom south of the high Himalayas. He was very fond of hearing and narrating tales and stories. Every night, he invariably listened to and related some tales. Whilst relating the tale, however, he would generally get tired and go to sleep. The tale remained incomplete each time. This was a common occurence, day after day, month after month. The Incomplete Tale got sick of this summary treatment. Either the Raja aught not to have begun, or else, having begun, he should have seen it to its final denouement. The Incomplete Tale propitiated the goddess and received the boon that anyone who did not complete her would be subject to any punitive action she considered fit. Thus armed with super-natural powers, the Incomplete Tale went to the palace and appeared in the dream of faithful bodyguard of the Raja. She asked him to warn the Raja that he should either not begin her, or if he did, he must complete her. Otherwise she would be obliged to kill him because she could no longer bear to remain incomplete day after day.

Next day, the bodyguard went to the Raja and told him his dream. The Raja frowned at this show of audaciousness, but did promise to complete the tale. But as we know, habits die hard. Indeed, they accompany a man to the cremation ground. So the Raja did try to complete the story that evening but dozed off again and soon fell fast asleep. And who dare disturb a king! So the Incomplete Tale flew into a rage and came to the dream of the faithful bodyguard again. 'Now listen,' she said, 'I am absolutely fed up and if the Raja does not complete me tomorrow, I will kill him and if you tell him about our second meeting, I will petrify you.' 'My dear story,' said the bodyguard, keep cool for just a few more days.'

But the story had had enough and would not listen. 'If you tell the Raja, you will be petrified into a stone. I will become a deadly needle and will get into the Raja's dinner. I will pierce his main artery and let him go to hell because he has ill-treated me long enough, and I cannot stand this any longer. And if you tell him this, you will become a block of stone. If he does not die with the needle or the plan misfires, I have an alternative one handy. When he is tired and thirsty after the hunting trip, I will appear in the form of a spring of clear water and as soon as he comes to drink it, I will create an avalanche and bury him alive. And if you tell him this, you will lose your own life. If this second plan also fails, I am going to appear in the form of a shady tree just at the time when he is tired after a hunt and wanting to rest. As soon as he lies down, one huge branch will fall on him crushing him to death. And if you tell him this, you will be transformed into a stone. And if this plan also fails, I will come in the form of a snake and bite him and put him to eternal sleep with my venom. And if you tell him, you well be transformed into a stone and mingle back with earth for ever.' Saying this the Tale disappeared.

The royal bodyguard got up with a start. He was covered with cold sweat and was trembling through and through. He was torn between the calls of duty and the fear of death. He thought to himself, 'I have eaten the salt of the Raja for many years and must save his life at any cost.' Thinking this, he started shadowing the king and volunteered to be on duty for twenty hours. The Raja, of course, repeated his daily performance the next evening and left the tale incomplete. The following day, when he sat down to have his meals, the faithful bodyguard stopped him and said that he would like to get the food examined. Sure enough, a deadly needle was discovered from the food. One more day passed and the Raja again left the tale incomplete as usual. The next day, after attending to the important affairs of the state, the Raja decided to go for a shikar. After a hot chase in the burning sun and sultry weather, the Raja located a beautiful spring and wanted to have water. The bodyguard however took out a water bottle and told him of the danger of taking cold water after a hot chase. The Raja agreed and took the water from the bottle. They had only gone a little distance when the hill behind the spring came crashing down. At nightfall the Raja again left the tale incomplete. The faithful bodyguard, however, again managed to save him by timely intervention. At last only one danger was left—that of the snake. So the bodyguard volunteered to stand guard in the bed chamber of the Raja. Sure enough, after sometime, the snake appeared and was killed by the bodyguard. Now as luck would have it, a few drops of the blood splashed on the face of the sleeping queen. The bodyguard thought it to be an ill omen and tried to wipe out the blood from her face. Just at that time, the Raja got up and saw the bodyguard touching the cheeks of the queen. He flew into a rage at the obvious impudence of the bodyguard. Without giving him any time to explain, the Raja ordered that he be put to death. The deadly doubt would not let him ask even for an explanation. Now as is customary, the bodyguard was asked for a last wish before he was hanged. He asked for one last meeting with the Raja. To remove any doubt, he told the Raja of his meeting with the Incomplete Tale and was transformed into a stone.

And the Raja repented ever after.

Folk-Songs of Nepal

ONE OF the richest aspects of Nepalese 'folklore' are the folk-songs with their high lyricism and exquisite composition. As we proceed, you will realize that there is a wide variety before you: some sweet and brimming with all the gentler emotions of life, some deeply appreciative of the good neighbourliness in which the Nepalese society lives, and some expressing the sheer joy of living. The imagery is as colourful as the alpine flowers of the Nepal highlands. Pangs of separation from the beloved and loved ones are expressed in emotionally charged couplets. Amorous feelings are given expression with freedom and lack of restraint. The folk-songs, have, therefore, a great ability to stir the emotions. Most of the songs are accompained by dancing.

Folk-songs form an essential part of the cultural activity in the interior of Nepal. Playing on the *Madal* and singing comes naturally to most Nepalese. There are many songs and dances in which both boys and girls take part, singly or in chorus, jointly or in separate groups, by far the most common form being where the girls sing and the *Marunis* (boys dressed as girls) dance with the boys.

The fairs, many of which are held all over the country the year round, offer a great opportunity for community singing and dancing. The villagers arrive in the fairs singing and dancing all the way. The whole atmoshphere resonates with melodies and reflects the inner accord of the Nepalese people with nature. Every village has a drama party and a show is held at the slightest excuse. Unfortunately, the entire song and dance atmosphere cannot be captured in words, not even in the words of the vernacular; much less in translation. However, the readers will be able to form a fair idea of the people who sing those songs.

Let us now glance through some of the most popular hits. The well-to-do society of Nepal has a martial background. It is, therefore, inevitable that many folk-songs have an army setting. The first song is sung by a soldier (*Lahuray*) and his beloved is usually represented by a *Maruni*. It has great flexibility, and many couplets are improvised as the song and dance progresses.

Lahuray: *Mo to ho sena ko lahuray*
Mo sang jachha ki sahi.
Maruni : *Chhi tista sena ko lahuray*
Timi sang jandai na sahi
Timi sang gayo bhani
Khutta dukhi janu bhayen.
Lahuray : *Oh liai diyun la sena ko gari*
Mo sang janchha kih sahi
Maruni: *Timi sang gayo bhani*
Bhuko mari janu bhayen.
Lahuray: *Oh lai diyan la*
Ration ko bori, mo sang . . .

Soldier: Oh fair dame,
I am a soldier from the army
Come with me, come with me.
Maruni: You are a soldier no doubt,
but you are not smart
I shan't come with you.
You go to distant lands
If I accompany you

My feet will get sore by constant marches
No, I won't come with you.
Soldier: Oh fair dame, come with me
You won't have to walk
For I'll take you in an army vehicle
I am a soldier, come with me, come with me.
Maruni: You are a soldier no doubt
but you are not smart,
I won't come with you.
If I come with you
I'll die of hunger
Oh I won't, I won't come with you.
Soldier: I'll get you a bag of army rations
Oh, come, oh come with me.

And the song goes on and on with many excuses of the beloved like where will I get the medicines, clothes, etc., and the boy replying that all sorts of comforts are available to a soldier in the army.

At the fairs, and, at the evening sing-song sessions, most of the songs start with the following rather meaningless lines. They are meant as an invitation for all to come and join in the sing-song.

Khane chamal chhaina
Launchhan sarangiko tanti!
There is no rice to eat
But the notes of sarangi are still sweet.

The next song talks of the peasant community, happy at the sight of lush-fields and still complaining of lack of rest.

Kati ramro mero yo pangre goru
Kati ramro mero hal
Kati ramro mero ubjani bali
Ramro chha mihinetko phal.
Dharti amai, dharti babai
Yasbata paunchhu anna
Pyaro ma garchhu, sanman garchhu
Dharti amai, dhanya!

Umer bitaen jotaima maile
Aena sukhko din
Jiu burho mero, man burho mero
Sukh chhaina ekai chhin!

How good are my bridled oxen
How nice is my plough
How sweet are my ripe crops
And sweet is the fruit of labour.
Earth is my mother, Earth is my father
From her I get my food
I love you, I honour you
Oh Mother Earth, I thank you.
An age I have passed in ploughing
The day of rest has not come
My body is old, my mind is old,
Not a moment's rest is there.

The next song is sung at the marriage of a girl.

Na ro na ro cheli timi maiti timro ghar hoina
Phool jasto timro joban aba timi hamro hoina
Na ra na ro. . .
Ankha bhari ansoo parne, aama baba rundai janes
Dhoka nira bhai ra behani
Ansoo poonchdai, bida garne
Bas bas cheli bhandai, saheli le laijane,
Saheli le laijane . . . Na ro na ro . . .
Sawan Bhadon runa lagyo cheli timro bidai ma
Kathai bhari bhandai aako chorana parne maiti ghar lai.
Cheli timao karmai esto bhandai jao aphoo lai bhandai jao.

Oh my daughter sweet,
Do not weep.
The parents' home is not your permanent home.
You have bloomed like a flower
And now you are not ours!
With brimming eyes,

The parents move forward
To bid her farewell.
Her brothers and sisters are at the door,
To bid farewell
Her friends have also arrived,
To bid her farewell
Even the rains have started weeping now,
For you are leaving us for ever
My daughter go now,
May God be with you,
Weep not my daughter,
The parents' home,
Is not your permanent home.

The next song has a touching theme with a very high lyrical quality. It is sung for '*Lahuray*', a newly enrolled youth who is going abroad on military service.

Na jao chhari yo desh,
Aama lai ruaye ra.
Na birsa janme ko thaon,
Aaphoo lai chhakaye ra.
Dhoi deo dukh aama ko,
Pasina le bagaye ra.
Chookao dudh ko bhara,
Mehnat le kamaye ra.
Na jao . . . .
Na par aama ko chhati,
Cheya cheya turkraye ra.
Uthao desh ka jhanda,
Swarga lai choowaye ra.

Don't go, leaving your mother-land,
Whilst your mother weeps.
Go if you must,
But don't forget your birthplace.
Go if you must,
But wash your mother's pangs of separation,
with your hard toil and sweat,
Pay her debt with your hard labour.

Do not forget your mother,
And your birth place,
Raise thy country's flag
To touch the very heaven.

And these verses express the villager's simple idea of love, linked with the landscape of Nepal and the Himalayas:

Himalai chuli iyo paribata
Hiun kaile jaminchha?
Bageko dani ureko chitta
Kahan gai thaminchha?
Bagaincha bhari phala re phula
Chheu chheuma karela
Ankha chhan timra junkiri jasta
Jimkaune parela
Sun jasto Nepal ke ramro dekhchha
Swarga chha sansarma
Sun jasto premke jun jasto dekhchha
Mayako sansarma

On the distant Himalayan peaks
When will the snow gather?
The running stream and the fickle mind
Where will they come to rest?
The garden is full of fruit and flowers
And here and there the vegetables grow
Your beautiful eyes and lovely eyelashes
Are pretty like the fire flies.
How lovely is my golden Nepal
Like heaven on this Earth
My sweetheart is pretty like the moon
And sweet is the world with love.

In the following song, a more plaintive note creeps in, in which the pangs of separation are uppermost.

Himalai chuli ke yati ramro
Sarpako kanchuli

Yo pap manma biraha chalyo
Na bajau bansari.

How fine it is, the Himalayan peak
like the skin of a snake
This separation has filled my heart with sorrow
Oh do not play the flute.

Shirko vindur lauma bhaujyu
Hamra dajyu ai ra puge, Nepali jyanma:
Tyatiko jhaljhalko ke manchhyau nani
kaile ra aunthe ti timra dajyu, ranaima pareka?

Put sindur on your hair, oh sister-in-law
My brother has come back to our
beloved Nepal:
Don't taunt me like this oh little brother,
Will he ever come, from the far off battlefield?

This song expresses the fickle-mindedness of a young damsel in the process of falling in love. Should she or should she not go with her lover?

Kali pari dai kati ramro, dhak topi,
Kadai ma galbandi.
Sanu sanu gai ko bachhi, hath ma linchh lahuri
Yu dali ma rassa chhaina, kina ghumchha mauri
Kali pari dai kati . . .
Sir ma laune sir ko topi, khutta ma laune jutta
Mero man ta do man bhayo eta jam ki uta
Kali pari dai kati . . .

How handsome is he
One who resides in that yonder valley
With a muffler on his shoulders,
And a slanting cap on his head.
How charming he looks,
The calves are very young,
There are no honey bearing flowers,

On the branches of these trees
Why are you hovering here oh bees,
How handsome is he.
His head covered with a cap, and shoes on his feet
My heart is unable to decide
To go with him or not to go.

On returning to his village after two years of service, a young Nepali lad spends the evening with village girls in a famous sing-song called *jhaore*.

Taruni: *Aba bheena na jao Lahuray*
Nepal lai ma painchha jaagira
Lahuray: *Jana sali chhore ra timi lai*
Nepal ma paaone chhoon jagira
Barujooko dhoori mooni
Bhainsi lukne dhoolo
Masita gayo bhane
Bhagya hola thoolo
Taruni: *Man pare ko khaunla piunla*
Na pare ko khan na
Esta kura na garo bheena
Kasai sitta janna
Lahuray: *Eso bhaye ao sali*
Dimla sunko baala
Aru sita gayo bhane
Toki dimla gaala
Taruni: *Sunko baala dimla bhanne*
Ahile hoina cohile
Timi sitta janna bheena
Talu rahi chha khoile

Girl: Do not go abroad my brother-in-law
You will get service in Nepal.
Boy: I will not go abroad, my darling
I will find a job in Nepal
Promise to marry me, my love
It will brighten your future.

Girl: We will make merry,
To our heart's desire,
I will not I swear,
I will not go with anyone else.
Boy: Then come and be my darling
I will give you a golden ring,
If you run away with someone else
I will cut your throat.
Girl: Your promise to give me a golden ring
It's long overdne
I can't be your sweetheart
For there is no hair on your head.

And this again has the eternal theme of love.

Keta: *Herana kanchhi paharai ma lalupote sabai phulyo*
Keti: *La hai kanchha sabai tipi malai lagai deona*
Keta: *Kahi jharchham cheeso jharna*
Dahi phulchhan phoola
Phoola ko jasto chokho preeti
Mero man ma rakha
Herana kanchhi . . .
Kahin dekhchhan denra kanra
Keti: *Kahi dakhchhan khola*
Preeti lagaon aja kanchha
Kati ramro hola
Herana kanchha. . .
Keta: *Sa ra ra hawa chalyo*
Aja paharai man
Hu ru ra jeeban bityo
Kanchhi ko samjha nai ma
Herana kanchhi . . .
Keti: *Danara wari ghaam lagyo*
Danra pari paani
Maya preeti lagai jaon hai
Bitaon jindgani
Herana kanchha . . .

Boy: Oh sweetheart, the red flowers are blooming!
The valley is ablaze!

Girl: Oh my darling, get me all the flowers,
Boy: Here flows the cold stream
There blossom the flowers
My love is pure like a flower,
Keep it in your heart.
Girl: Oh sweetheart, the red flowers are blooming,
The valley is ablaze!
This lovely landscape,
Where valley and rivers alternate,
Let us make love today
How sweet will it be my love,
Oh my darling, get me all the flowers.
Boy: A strong wind blows
Today in the valley,
The days are passing
with my darling.
See my love, the red flowers are blooming,
The valley is ablaze!
Girl: The sun is shining on this side of the valley
The rain is falling on that side of the valley
(Behold the beauty of nature)
Let us live together,
Oh my darling, get me all those flowers.

The next one is again an army song and not only the most popular, but by far the most flexible. The men and the *marunis* go on improvising couplets as the song progresses; reverting back to the original opening stanzas from time to time.

Oh dhalki dhalki na hintnu hola
Yo kali ma jieu jane ber chhaina

Do not, oh do not walk with a swagger
It does not take long to lose one's youth.

Timi ta jai jao Bombai sahar ma
Nargis bhaye ra
Timi lai bhetnu, mo nishchai aunchhun
Rajkapur bhaye ra Sayenli, yo kali. . .

You go to Bombay and become Nargis,
To meet you I sure will come as Raj Kapur
Oh sweety, do not walk with a swagger,
For it takes no time to lose one's youth

India ko Raja le, Kashmir ko dhawa ma
Urai layayo rail ko hawama

The Government of India
Has sent us to Kashmir
On the fastest moving train.
Don't walk with a swagger,
It does not take long
To lose one's life.

And wherever the soldiers go, they blame the girls of the place for winking at them and teasing them.

Kara ma kara, kamarai khayo,
Chhala ko peti le
Hero na daju bhai gijaunchha mo lai
Yo shahar ko keti le
Aju to mo le bhat ee ra khayo
Tihun to karela,
Yo shahar ko keti; Chinnunna janne,
Jham kaunchha parela.

My leather belt is so tight,
It has eaten into my waist,
And to top it all
The girls of this place tease me.
I have eaten rice today,
With the vegetable of bitter gourd
The girls of this place
Wink at me even though I do not know them !

And the couplets go on endlessly; added at will and improvised. The song occasionally reverts back to:

Dhalki dhalki na hintnu hola
Yo kalima jiu jane ber chhaina

And now the most popular folk-song, a favourite of the young and old alike, more so when they have had an overdoze of *rakshi*! Holding each other by the waists or shoulders, more to support each other, actually men and women go on singing with a stress on the last syllable stretching it long like an elastic band.

Kanth ma laune kanth phula a a a. . .
Ais he raja la bechi khayo o o o. . .
Aise he raja ko asha mo lai chhaina,
Gai jaunla maite ko desh ma. . . . . .

The lovely necklace that I had,
Has been sold by this heartless man,
I have no hopes on him,
I will go to my parent's home.

And the blames go on multiplying. You have to hear it to believe it. I wish I could tell you the tune of this song.Boys and *marunis*, holding each other by the waists, go on swirling and trying to stretch the last syllable longer and longer with each breath! *Phula*! *a a a. . .* and *khayo o o o. . .*

And in this very class of short odes, now an all-time favourite, which most of you may have heard sometime or the other:

Nainitalo, Nainitalo
Ghumi aya rela,
Ankh ma laune kalo kajal
Bulbula ma tela; Nainitalo
Nainitalo, Nainitalo.

Oh sweety, come with me,
I'll take you to Nainital,
I will give you a ride on the train
I will buy you kajal for your eyes
And perfumed oil for your hair,
Oh sweety, come with me,
I will take take you to Nainital.

Some Selected Proverbs

THE PROVERBS of a people form a very important aspect of their folklore. The proverbs represent the village wiseacres and provide an index to the thoughts, and norms of the common man who, in fact, is the most important subject of study for a proper evaluation of the folklore.

Here, in this chapter, I present some selected proverbs. My aim is to prove to my readers that the Nepalese language is as flexible and easily adaptable to different thoughts and shades of meaning as any other language of the world. Semantics as in the other developed languages, is also an essential part of the Nepalese dialects.

The proverbs will be given in Roman, generally followed by their literal meaning. After that, Indian as well as English equivalents will be given where possible. It goes without saying, however, that it is not the literal meaning of the proverbs that matters. Nor can equivalents always represent the entire meaning of the proverbs which are full of high-voltage, human experience and packed with the wisdom of ages. Do not, therefore, go for the mere meanings, but think of the attitudes and values of the people who use them.

1. *Andha deshma ankha chimlaonu, langra deshma khutta khumchiaonu.*
   In the country of the blind, act as a blind man and when amongst the lame people, walk with a limp.
   Jaisa desh, waisa bhesh. When in Rome, do as the Romans do.

2. *Aago tapnu muhra ko, kura sunnu burha ko*
   Enjoy the heat of a log, and, heed the advice of the elders.

3. *Indra ko aghari swarga ko biyan.*
   To describe the heaven in front of Indra (The king of heaven). *Ulte baans Bareilly ko.* To carry coal to New-Castle.

4. *Ishwar ko drishti ma sabhai barabar.*
   All men are equal in the eyes of God.

5. *Ekant basa, jhagra na jhamela.*
   When you stay alone, you are free from quarrels and misunderstandings.

6. *Kusangat bhanda ekant asal.*
   It is better to stay alone than to have bad company.

7. *Karodhi lai sukh kahan.*
   A man with a bad temper has no peace.

8. *Sabhai bhanda pachhi aune, manjha ma sutnu khojne.*
   Last to arrive but desires the best bed.
   First deserve, then desire.

9. *Sadhu sant bhukai mare, lucha khanchhan kheer*
   The saints die of hunger, the corrupt enjoy sweet-dishes. This lyrical proverb is used to criticize mismanagement of the Government.

10. *Gheo na tel, paka buri sel,*
    Has neither ghee nor oil, but still boasts of choicest dishes.
    Thotha Chana, baje Ghana.
    An empty vessel makes much noise.

11. *Unnati ko sathma avanati chha.*
Ups and downs are a part of life. *Pehle rah kamale phir rah zawale.*

12. *Kukur jasto guni ra jawoi jasto baiguni kohi hundaina.*
No one is as faithful as a dog and as unfaithful as a son-in-law.

13. *Kut peet lee bhut pani bhagchha.*
A good thrashing will even scare away the ghosts. With sincere effort and hard work, any problem can be solved.

14. *Keti kasti chha, bolnu na parne*
Keta kasto chha, bhannu na parne.
When the boy and girl like each other, why worry about their looks? In Hindi: *Miyan biwi razi to kya kare ga kazi.*

15. *Chara lai sunko pinjra bhanda jangalai piyaro.*
For a bird, living in the free air of the jungle is better than life in a golden cage.

16. *Jahan shanti ko bas, tahan probhu ko bas.*
God resides at a peaceful place.

17. *Hulmul ma jeo jogaunu, anikal ma beo jogaunu.*
Save thyself in a mob and save a seedlings during famine.

18. *Aath ana ko lenden, rupaiya ko khan pin.*
When you possess only eight annas, how can you make a budget for one rupee.
Apni chadar dekh kar paaon phailao.
Cut your coat according to your cloth.

19. *Aphai boksi aphai dhami.*
You are your own ghost, and your own sorcerer. Or in other words: You are your own best friend and your own worst enemy.

20. *Kaamko bairi alchi, bhudhi ko bairi ris*
Bal ko bairi bega, sabhko bairi kangal.
Laziness is an enemy of hard work, bad temper of wisdom.

Pride is the enemy of strength, and poverty the enemy of all.

21. *Jahan kangal, uhi chandal.*
Hunger leads to crime.

22. *Jo ropchha, tehi paunchha.*
As you sow, so shall you reap. *Jo boe ga, wohi kaate ga.*

23. *Pake ko bans terho hundaina.*
The fully grown bamboo can't be bent. Old habits die hard.

24. *Bhera bhera sang, bakhra bakhra sang.*
The sheep move with sheep and goats with goats. Birds of a feather flock together.

25. *Sukh bhognu jana sangha, dukh bhognu manasangha.*
Share your happiness with others, your grief alone.

26. *Man changa ta loti ma ganga.*
When your heart is guileless, your Ganga is in your pitcher. (What this implies is that when you live a clean life, you don't have to go to Ganga to wash your sins).

27. *Geru kapra le matra jogi hundaina.*
One can't become a saint by donning saffron clothes; or actions speak louder than words.

28. *Ghamand phulchha, tarah phaldaina*
Pride may flower for a while, but does not bear fruit. Pride hath a fall. *Garur ka sar neecha.*

29. *Arka lai khane ko khalta ma aphai parchha.*
When you dig pits for others, you yourself fall in them. *Kar bura, ho bura.*

30. *Nango rukh ma kohi basdaina.*
None takes shelter under a leafless tree.

31. *Akbari sunlai kasi launu pardaina.*
The gold from Emperor Akbar's era needs no scrutiny, or in other words, the truth need not be verified.

32. *Arule tapai bhanos na bhanos aphai mapai.*
Self praise is no recommendation.

33. *Arko ko aas, nitya upwas.*
He who depends on others always remains hungry. *Apne hath, Jagannath.*

34. *Aye bobu ko, gaye sahu ko.*
Easy come, easy go. *Male-e-mufat, dil-e-bereham.*

35. *Aphno kaj mahakaj.*
Your own duty is you first responsibility. This can also be translated as, God helps those who help themselves.

36. *Avashayakta, avishkar ko janni ho.*
Necessity is the mother of invention. *Zarurat eejad ki maa hai.*

37. *Imanat chha ta, sab thok chha.*
Honesty is the best policy.

38. *Ghat phute gamer lute.*
Outsiders derive undue advantage from your family quarrels. In Hindi, this has an excellent rendering in *Ghar ka bhedi Lanka dhaye.*

39. *Biralo gayo musa ko raj.*
When the cat is away, the mice can play.

40. *Thorai bolne aphno bhed kholdaina.*
Less talk has less danger of exposing yourself. If speech is silver, silence is gold.

41. *Jhinja le murho polchha, lahrale pahro tanchha.*
Even a spark of fire can burn a log, and the movement of a small stone can cause a landslide.

42. *Chucha ko dhan lucha le khanchha.*
The wealth of a miser is squanderer by the vagabonds.

Glossary

Akashvani	—A voice from the heavens.
Apsara	—A celestial dancer from the court of Hindu God Indra, the ruler of heavens.
Ashtami	—The eighth day of a month.
Asura	—Demon.
Aukhadi or *aushadi*	—Medicinal preparations.
Ban Devta	—The jungle god.
Bhatti	—In Nepal, some wayside hotels are managed by the girls. Boarding, lodging and country liquor is provided there to the pedestrains and way-farers. These hotels are called *Bhattis.*
Bhattiwali	—The lady owner of a *Bhatti.*
Boksini	—A man-eating witch.
Brahma	—The Hindu God of creation.
Daju	—Brother
Dawapar	—See *yuga.*
Dharamsala	—An inn attached to a shrine where free lodging and boarding are provided.

Gotra Hatya	—Murder of one's own blood relations.
Guleli	—A hunting device.
Isht-Devta	—Most favourite deity.
Jaimala	—A garland offered by a princess to her chosen husband.
Jal Devta	—The deity of rivers, lakes and ponds.
Jetha	—The eldest brother in a family. The brothers are serially called as *Jetha*—eldest, *Mayenla*—number two, *Sayenla*—number three, *Kayenla*—number four, *Rayenla*—number five and *Kanchha*—the youngest. *Jetha*, *Mayenla*, etc., are generic terms and prefixed with different words can mean many relations. *Jetha-Babu* means the elder brother of one's father and, therefore, paternal uncle. In case a woman has more than one husband, the eldest will be called *Jetha Babu* to all the children meaning, the oldest father. *Jetha Jamai* would mean the husband of the eldest daughter in a family. In case, there are three brothers in a family, they will be called *Jetha*, *Mayenla* and *Kanchha*, and so on.
Jethi	—The eldest sister in a family. Other sisters are *Mayenli*—number two, *Sayenli*—number three, *Kayenli*—number four, *Rayenli*—number five, *Kanchhi*—the youngest.
Jethi Ama	—Aunt, wife of the paternal uncle that is *Jetha Babu*. Also one's mothers' eldest sister. In case a man has more than one wife, the eldest will be *Jethi Ama* to all the children. *Jethi Bahu* means the wife of the eldest son; and so on.
Jhanr-Ko-Jhol	—Rice beer.
Kanchha and Kanchhi	—See *Jetha—Jethi*.
Kubera	—The Hindu God of hoarded wealth.

Kura	—Language, thus *Gurung Kura* means the language spoken by the *Gurungs*.
Lahuray	—A soldier. After the treaty of Sagauli (1815) when the Gorkhas were first enrolled in the Indian Army, their Training Centre was at Lahore. Thus, the soldiers came to be called *Lahuray*. Later the centres were shifted but the term Lahuray stuck on. Thus soldiers of 5 Gorkha Rifles with centre at Abbotabad came to be called Abbotabadi Lahuray and so on.
Lakshmi	—Hindu goddess of wealth.
Madal	—A drum type musical instrument. It is slung from the neck whilst playing. It is an essential instrument for giving beat with most sing-song and dancing sessions.
Mahadeva	—One name of Shiva, the Hindu god of destruction and procreation.
Maitighar	—Parent's home.
Maruni	—A boy dressed as a girl to take part in a folk dance.
Parikrama	—Act of going around a shrine, a lake of a mountain etc.
Parvati	—Consort of Lord Shiva, the Hindu god of destruction and procreation.
Purnima	—The full moon night. Prefixed by the name of a month, it indicates the full moon night occuring in that month. Thus *Baisakh Purnima* would, mean the full moon night during the month of *Baisakh*.
Raj-Purohit	—The court astrologer. Also the Brahmin court adviser on religious matters.
Rakshi	—Alcoholic drink; mostly rum.
Rodigarh	—A youth club. In some tribes, notably Gurungs, a *Rodigarh* is a club for young

	boys and girls. They meet there, hold sing-song sessions, fall in love and marry by "trial and error" method to find the most suitable partner. Some natural children are also born. They are called *Rodigarh-Ka-Keta-Keti* (the boys and girls of the *Rodigarh*).
Sankranti	—The first day in a month. Prefixed by the name of the month it means the first day of that month. For example, *Chaitra Sankranti* would mean the first day of *Chaitra*.
Satyuga	—See *yuga*.
Shap	—A curse.
Shiva	—The Hindu god of destruction and procreation.
Srishti Rachna	—The creation of Universe by God.
Swayamvar	—The ceremony organised for Hindu princesses of yesteryear to let them chose their husbands.
Tapasya	—Worship for a long time.
Taruni	—A young and beautiful girl.
Trilok	—The three worlds of Hindu mythology; *Swarga*—the heaven, *Prithvi*—the Earth and *Patal*—the dwelling place for demons and other members of the under world.
Vaid	—A doctor of herbs dealing in Ayurvedic medicines.
Vaikunth	—A portion of heaven where Vishnu, the Hindu god of preservation lives.
Vibhuti	—Ashes from the sacred fire.
Vishnu	—The Hindu god of preservation.
Vyas	—The Hindu sage who wrote the Epic *Mahabharata*.
Yajna	—A religious ceremony and ritual involving burning of sacred fire, incense sticks and recitation of sacred mantras.

Yama, Yamraj	—The Hindu god of death.
Yamdut	—The messenger of *Yama*, the god of death.
Yamlok	—The area ruled by Yama.
Yuga	—An age. As per Hindu belief, the Universe goes through four ages, the *Satyuga* or the age of righteousness. With descending degree of good, the other ages are *Dwaper*, *Treta* and *Kaliyug*. Thus *Kaliyug* is the *yuga* when crime will be at its peak. We are now in *Kaliyug*.

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